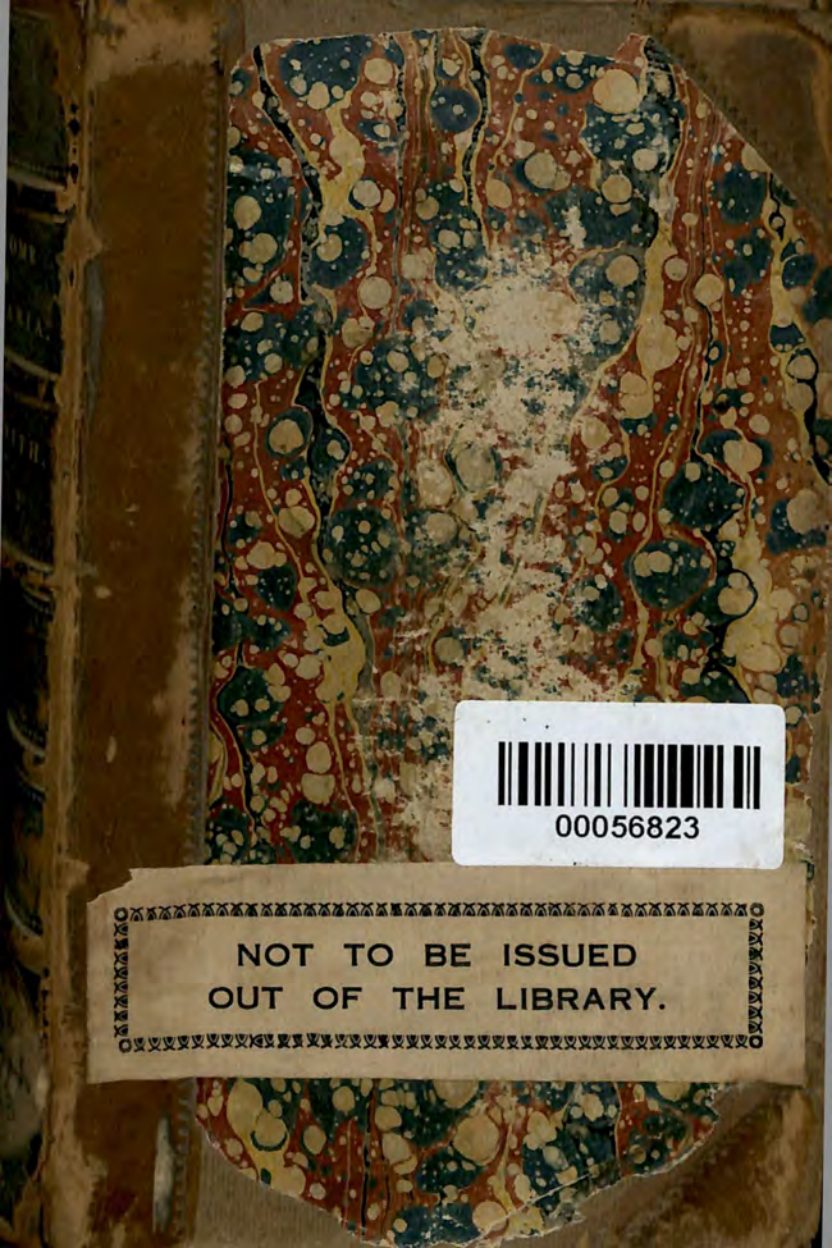
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MY HOME IN TASMANIA.

HOBARTON.

FROM A SKETCH BY THE BISHOP OF TASMANIA.

MY HOME

IN

TASMANIA,

DURING A RESIDENCE OF NINE YEARS.

By Mrs. CHARLES MEREDITH.

Adventure Bay.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

56823
ac.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1852.

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TO

OUR MOST GRACIOUS AND BELOVED

QUEEN,

This simple chronicle of nine years, passed in one of Her Majesty's most remote Colonies, and devoted to the description of scenes and objects familiar to thousands of her faithful subjects, is, in the humble hope of Her Royal approval, and with the most respectful and loyal attachment, inscribed by

Her Majesty's

Obedient humble Servant,

LOUISA ANNE MEREDITH.

PREFACE.

My gossiping "Notes and Sketches of New South Wales" met with a reception so cordial and flattering, and so far beyond my own expectations, that a grateful acknowledgment, in the shape of a second series, became the natural and inevitable result. The delay in its appearance has been reluctantly prolonged from year to year, as our erratic life, and the exacting duties of the present, precluded attention to a task which, however congenial, had only reference to the future (for, after the completion of a work here, fully a year must elapse ere any intelligence of its further advancement reaches the writer); and this circumstance, so unfavourable to any literary work, may per-

haps excuse the desultory character of the present one. Could any of my readers have marked the fitful and uncertain progress of my notes—sometimes amidst a Babel of busy tongues, loud on the relative merits of humming or peg-tops—or, more often, in brief intervals between lessons in history, geography, or arithmetic—when, turning from the mighty records of Rome and Greece, of Cæsar and Lycurgus, I have essayed to continue the memoir of a pet opossum; or, after setting an "ugly" sum in multiplication, have laid down slate and pencil to finish the descriptive portrait of some delicate bush flower—they would less marvel at omissions and discrepancies committed, than that many more probable blunders had been avoided; and would kindly lay aside the severity of criticism in judging so unpretending a work.

The risk of typographical errors in a work which must of necessity go through the press without its author's correction or revision, is unavoidably great; but the comparative rarity of such mistakes in my former volume, published under the same adverse circumstances, encourages me to hope that the present may be as fortunate.

Lest the minute, perhaps trifling, detail, entered into in some parts, may seem inclining towards the egotistical, I should perhaps remark that I have been induced to adopt a more personal narrative, and to identify ourselves with the simple realities around us, just as events truly occurred, instead of generalizing my observations, because I have found, from my own feelings in the perusal of works of somewhat similar character, that the interest of such unvarnished histories is proportionally enhanced, according to the degree of identity preserved by the narrator; and, acting upon this hint from experience, I have unscrupulously practised the plain matter-of-fact candour and "individuality" which we ourselves like to find in the narratives of other dwellers in new countries.

The great amount of misconception and the positive misrepresentations relative to the present social condition of this colony, now prevalent, not in England only, but wherever the name of Van Diemen's Land is known, also determined me to enter more into domestic details than otherwise I might have thought it pleasant or desirable to do. No general descriptions would so well tend to

show the truth, as the veritable chronicle of every-day life, in our solitary yet cheerful country homes, that stand all day with open doors, and all night without a shutter or bar or bolt to the windows; as innocent of lawless intrusion as dwellings of a like isolated and lonely character would be in any part of Britain—indeed, much more so; and why our really peaceful lives should be represented at home as invested with such terrors by day and perils by night, as might beseem the heroes of old romance in their most doughty days, I am wholly at a loss to conjecture, and can only hope that my humble efforts in the cause of truth may avail in dispelling at least some portion of the evil clouds that at present sully and overshadow our good name.

I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of here repeating my grateful and sincere thanks to our highly-esteemed friend, the Bishop of Tasmania, whose kind voluntary offer of his valuable aid, as my illustrator, has enabled me to present some of our lovely scenes to my readers in a form so well worthy of their own beauty, and so immeasurably enhancing the interest of my written descriptions. It is likewise right to remark, that beyond

a knowledge of the localities mentioned, his Lordship has no acquaintance whatever with the contents of my MSS.; for my errors, be they few or many, I am alone responsible.

Of my own trifling sketches, I am perfectly aware that in their accuracy rests their sole merit: that they are rigidly faithful, I can honestly vouch; and as, in weaving a garland, small and insignificant flowers, worthless in themselves, ofttimes aid the general effect, so I am induced to hope, that my little drawings may peep pleasantly out from nooks and corners of the book, which would otherwise remain unoccupied.

I beseech the august body of British critics to receive my unfeigned thanks for the unmixed meed of approval and praise vouchsafed to my last appearance in print (and many former ones). Not one dissentient voice mingled in the pleasant sounds of kindly welcome which so delightfully echoed even into our far-away solitude here, and, like a singing summer breeze, spread over the peaceful current of my tranquil happy life a bright sunny ripple of surprise and joy; for from the generous reviewer of the mighty "Quarterly," to the passing notices of provincial papers, every pen seemed

dipped in honey to greet my unpretending little tome of womanly gossip.

Some of the Sydney papers, I have been told, kindly took considerable pains to prove the correctness with which I had formerly estimated their elegance and ability; but as I have never myself met with any of their characteristic effusions, I still remain in blissful unconsciousness of the amount of my obligation to them.

Riversdale, Great Swan Port,
Van Diemen's Land, July 18th, 1850.

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NINE YEARS IN TASMANIA.

ENTRANCE TO PORT ARTHUR.

CHAPTER I.

Departure from Sydney.—The "Sir George Arthur."—An Arrest.—Colonial Craftsmen.—Opposite Neighbours.—"Dick."—Hippolyte Rocks.—Cape Pillar.—Tasman's Island.—Cape Raoul.

THE concluding paragraph of my gossiping chronicle of experiences in New South Wales mentioned our departure from Sydney on our way to Van Diemen's Land; and I now resume the slender thread of my story where I then broke off *.

* Notes and Sketches of New South Wales, during a Residence in that Colony from 1839 to 1844. London. Murray, 1849.

I return to the morning of our embarkation, when, in a straggling procession, including the baby, the new nursemaid, the old pointer, and sundry of our goods and chattels on trucks and hand-barrows (the main body having been previously shipped), we proceeded to the jetty, and bade adieu to the friends who came "to see us out of sight." I must confess that I felt less regret than I could have believed possible, at leaving a country which had been my home for above a year; and if a wistful thought did stray back to the bright and beautiful gardens, the lovely wild flowers, the delicious fruits, and the deep blue sky of the ever-brown land, such a thick hot cloud of dust, flies, mosquitoes, and other detestabilities, rose in imagination before me, as threw a veil over all such charms; and I parted from them with a stout heart, full of hopefulness for the future, and rejoicing, above all things, to take our baby-boy into a more temperate climate, where the fair promise of his infancy might have some prospect of being realized in a life of health, strength, and intelligence.

His good kind-hearted nurse (who, being married, could not leave the colony with us) stood

sobbing most piteously as her little charge was borne away in the arms of a stranger, whose domestic ties were as yet unformed, she being a starch, prim spinster, desirous of seeing as much of the world as possible, and of showing it a very tasteful wardrobe in return. I, too, grieved to lose my old servant, for she was as cheerful, willing, earnest, and simple a creature as I ever knew; albeit not perhaps the most dainty waiting-woman in the world—for, to hear her footsteps in the house, one might fancy some tame elephant was pacing about, and I had often found reason to rejoice that all the rooms at Homebush were on the ground-floor—but she was so affectionate and good, that I should have been well pleased if her heavy footsteps could still have followed our own. She had odd quaint notions and expressions, too, that were very droll, uttered as they were with such earnest seriousness. She told me once, that her former master "was a very learned gentleman, a great scholar—*so* clever at preaching and doctoring, and talking languages of foreign parts. Indeed, ma'am, he did serve his time at Cambridge College for a parson, only he didn't never take no sort of sitiwation after."

The vessel had dropped down the stream, and was anchored some distance below the town; and when, at the end of our long pull, we came alongside, the aspect of the "Sir George Arthur" was anything but inviting. (Why will people persist in giving male names to ships?) She, that is, "Sir George," had been employed in the coal-trade between Sydney and the mines at Newcastle, on the Hunter River, and bore as evident marks of her sooty calling as ever did an old coal-boat on the Birmingham Canal; whilst the air sweeping round her wafted over us a veritable coal-smoke odour, full of murky reminiscences of the good old town. There she lay—as ugly, ill-shapen, slovenly, dirty, black, disreputable-looking a tub as ever sullied the bright blue waves of old Neptune. However, as our present lot was cast in her—no other vessel for Hobarton offering at the time—we went on board the mis-shapen craft, which seemed to have been built as much as possible after the model of a brewer's vat. The deck was as dirty as the rest, and my cabin, which was tolerably large and convenient, so swarmed with wood-lice that I soon began to have a tolerably vivid idea of another of the plagues of Egypt, that of flies

having been fully realized during our sojourn in Sydney.

Whilst we were at dinner, a slight disturbance arose from the abrupt entrance of certain subordinate members of the legal profession in search of some considerate friend, who no doubt wished to spare them the pain of parting, and had therefore quietly shipped himself without the ceremonies of leave-taking, unless taking French leave may be so considered; but the affectionate interest of such friends is not easily eluded, and the poor young man was finally compelled to forego his humane intentions, and return to shore with his *friends*, despite the most vehement protestations that he was somebody else.

I had hoped to have been able to remain on deck until we had fairly passed through those great gates, the North and South Heads, and could look back on the grand entrance to Port Jackson which had so delighted me a year before; and many were the subtle deceptions I practised on myself as to the real nature of the indescribable symptoms which were gradually and horribly creeping over me—but all would not do; the approaching misery made a stride with every

roll and lurch of the vessel, and a positive leap when she "went about." My love for the picturesque waned most lamentably, and I stowed away my sketch-book as an useless incumbrance: cliffs, woods, snow-white beaches, and blue waves were at a deplorable discount, and all sea scenery was so distasteful to me, that I retreated to my berth.

Servants who are engaged to go a sea voyage always declare themselves quite indifferent to sea-sickness—"never were the least ill all the way from England"—and so protested my new maid; but she proved after all to be quite as poor a sailor as myself. I was compelled, therefore, to make some exertions in taking care of my little boy, who appeared happily unconscious of the prevailing indisposition.

Having a fair and sufficient wind, we expected to have made a quick passage; but, owing to the vessel being (in strict accordance with the usual colonial style of that period) only half-rigged, and wanting top-gallant and studding sails, she progressed very slowly. A singular disinclination to finish any work completely, is a striking characteristic of colonial craftsmen, at least of the "currency," or native-born portion. Many of

them who are clever, ingenious, and industrious, will begin a new work, be it ship, house, or other erection, and labour at it most assiduously until it is about two-thirds completed, and then their energy seems spent, or they grow weary of the old occupation, and some new affair is set about as busily as the former one, which, meanwhile, lingers on in a comfortless, helpless, useless condition, till another change comes over the mind of the workman, and he perhaps returns to the old work, to which, if a house, he does just enough to enable the impatient proprietors to occupy it; or if a ship, for it to go to sea in a half-fledged condition, which is rarely improved afterwards.

The thoughtful kindness of an old friend of Mr. Meredith's had supplied us with some new novels, as suitable provision for the voyage, and when the horrible sea-sickness had subsided into its second stage of half-dead, half-dreamy, and wholly deplorable stupor and helplessness, I lay and beguiled the weary time by the fictitious miseries of the heroines; though, as their narrated afflictions all happened on dry land, I fear my sympathy was of a very niggardly order, perhaps closely verging on the envious.

Unlike our snug apartment in the "Letitia," our present rooms were entered from the mess-cabin, the upper portion of the sliding door and a window frame beside it being fitted with Venetian shutters, which, as they could not by any device be induced to shut close, were a perpetual annoyance, and kept my ingenuity constantly at work, devising stratagems to complete the concealment they refused to afford,—but we could not block them wholly, for want of air.

My opposite neighbours naturally attracted some of my attention and interest, as I lay contemplating the outer world of the mess-cabin through the chinks in my shutters. The lady had, like myself, been invisible for some days, but her indefatigable lord was all that time a prey to the most alarming excitement, darting constantly in and out of her cabin in a most distracting manner, and keeping the slide-door vibrating to and fro like a pendulum. Any one who has ever seen a boy with a live mouse in his hat, covered over with an outspread handkerchief, and remembers the nervous twitchings up of the corner to peep in, and the spasmodic hiding-up again, lest the mouse should jump out, may imagine the daily process of my

worthy neighbour "over the way." Fifty times a day would he dart out, shove the door violently to —at the imminent peril of his fingers—and after making various stages of one, two, and three yards towards the companion stairs, rush frantically back again, and bolt the door inside in a most decided manner, always limiting the aperture to the smallest possible space that he could thrust himself through, and doing all with the greatest noise possible, until my sufferings from these shocks became so intense, that I could not help pitying those of the young wife to whose solace and benefit they were especially dedicated.

In a berth a little beyond this abode the master of the vessel, the "captain," who had remained there invisible for some days, whether really indisposed, or only indisposed to do his duty, I cannot determine; but certain it is, that he refused to go on deck, or to take any part in the command, further than by receiving and giving messages in his cabin. The crew were an idle unruly set, not more than one or two among them knowing anything of seamanship, and those very little; and the owner of the whole concern being on board, chose to stand at the wheel

himself a part of each day, and with a knowing wink to such of the passengers as he took into his confidence, informed them that "the captain's orders *was*, that the wessel should be steered south half west, but I 've kep' her away a point or two to the west,"—which accounted for our being rather close in-shore, and must have contributed greatly to assist the invisible captain in determining the ship's position and course. We were fortunate in having had fine weather hitherto.

In condemning the idleness of the crew and servants on board, I must make one memorable exception. There was a smart, active, good-natured boy, about ten or twelve years old, who, if ever ubiquity fell to the lot of mortal form, possessed that property; he was everywhere, doing everything for everybody, and apparently in at least three places at the same time:—

"Dick! take Mr. Smith some hot water."

"Dick! Mr. Jones wants his coat brushed."

"Dick! bring a light in the cabin."

"Dick! go and swab the deck."

"Dick! peel them 'taturs for cook."

"Dick! you lazy scoundrel—steward says you 've not cleaned his knives."

"Dick! go and water the sheep" (a whole flock formed part of the cargo).

"Dick! go and help reef topsails."

"Dick! feed the geese."

"Dick! take these bones to my dog," &c., &c., &c.

The cry of Dick—Dick—Dick—resounded all day long, and poor Dick seemed really to execute all the multifarious orders given him, with the most unflinching alacrity and good humour. One day Mr. Meredith inquired of the owner, if the ubiquitous Dick was an apprentice in the ship. "Why, no," drawled forth the broad burly personage addressed; and then he added, with a slow smile overspreading and widening his ample countenance, —"No—he aint a 'prentice, he 's a nevy o' mine, as come aboard for a holiday!"

Alas! for poor relations!

I began to make a "rule-of-three" statement of the question—if in a cruize for a holiday, Dick has harder work and rougher usage than any other creature on board, required the amount of Dick's sufferings at school?—but my heart failed me—I could not work the sum; and I comfort myself in the thought, that whatever vagrant propensities might attack Dick in subsequent holidays, he would

not be likely to indulge them by a voyage with his uncle.

As we neared Cape Pillar, on the tenth day of the voyage, I made an heroic effort to leave my berth, and went on deck for the first time since passing the Heads. Shortly after I had taken my place (on a comfortable steady hen-coop), and had begun to enjoy my return to the upper air and the exhilarating scene around me, a great sensation seemed to arise in the small community—servants ran about and knocked up against each other in the orthodox way of people who wish to show that they have no time to lose—then they dived into the cabin in an agitated and important manner—presently they reappeared, one with a cushion, another with a basket, a third with a cloak—and after spreading these about, all again plunged violently below. Another charge accomplished the conveyance on deck of an umbrella, a pillow, a shawl, a book, and another umbrella. Then came, in more slow and stately fashion, bobbing up gradually and fitfully out of the companion, a large easy chair, in and about and round which, as the nucleus of the whole, the other movables were carefully disposed, and both umbrellas opened ready for active service.

Finally, after another pause, heralded by a servant, half carried by her vigilant spouse, and followed by two more servants, came the pretty young lady herself, thickly veiled and folded in multitudinous envelopes. She was presently seated in the easy chair, her feet raised on a second chair, and the two umbrellas so carefully arranged that she became again invisible, and my valiant resolve of tottering across the deck, to offer her the common civilities natural between such partners in calamity (our respective husbands being on the most amicable passenger terms) was fairly and finally extinguished. I felt wholly unequal to the perilous task of storming such a citadel of exclusiveness, and remained faithful to my hen-coop and more accessible acquaintances.

It was a most beautiful afternoon, sunny and pleasant, with a fair breeze, and, as we sailed along the picturesque coast of Tasmania, the deep bays, rocky headlands, and swelling hills, formed a charming panorama, which I roughly and hastily sketched as we glided past. The white-cliffed Hippolyte Rocks, commonly called by colonial seamen the "Epaulettes," rising squarely, like masses of neat masonry above the sea, had exactly the appearance

of a fort, and I almost expected to discern a flag floating over them, or to be startled by the flash and boom of a cannon from their snow-white walls; but a flight of sea-birds rising from the summit was the only token of living residents that the formidable rocks displayed.

The southern promontory of Fortesque Bay appeared to be entirely composed of upright basaltic columns, some of them standing alone, like tall obelisks, but the greater number forming groups of mimic towers and chimneys. The coast rises considerably towards the south, where the mountain-range terminates abruptly in the Cape Pillar, a grand basaltic precipice, or rather an assemblage of precipices, which, seen from the sea, every moment assume some new and more picturesque aspect. Separated from the mainland only by a strait of half a mile in width is Tasman's Island, a scarcely less striking feature in this most grand scenery than the Cape Pillar. Like it, the island is composed of basaltic columns, though on a less stupendous scale, but exceedingly fantastic in form, particularly on the southern side, where the taper spires and pinnacles seem a part of some ancient Gothic edifice, some "Lindisfarne" or "Tintern"

TASMAN'S ISLAND AND CAPE PILLAR.

FROM A SKETCH BY THE BISHOP OF TASMANIA.

of bygone glory; whilst, as we gained a broader view of the cape, it assumed the appearance of a fortification—a wall and seaward tower at the north-east end being singularly well defined. When parallel with the strait, we gained through it a fine view of another high basaltic promontory, Cape Raoul, the entrance to Port Arthur being between the two; but this was soon lost, and the island seemed to fold in, as it were, with the westerly cliffs of the cape, until in a south view they formed one towering stupendous mass of dark rocks, most richly tinged with the changeful rose-colour, and purple, and gold of the sunset's glorious hues, which shone forth in still greater lustre from contrast with the deep chasms and ravines which were in almost black shadow, and with the white crested billows of the blue sea, that dashed their glittering spray high over the broken crags. It was a scene never to be forgotten! I have heard much of the grandeur of the "North Cape" at midnight; but I would not lose my memory of Cape Pillar at sunset for all the icy glitter of that more renowned scene.

One great omission in my meagre descriptive sketch I must here supply, and insert the "figures,"

which well sustained their share in the beauty of the scene. These were a very elegant-looking (but I have no doubt a very dirty and disagreeable) little schooner, which, as she kept still closer in-shore than our shapeless unwieldy vessel could do, gave that life and interest to the sea portion of our view, which a sailing vessel always affords; distance lending enough of enchantment to romancify the veriest tub that ever swam, if her sails look white in the sunshine; and the swarming clouds of "mutton-birds" continually rising from the sea, where they had floated unobserved, or flying, dipping, swimming, and diving all around us—these would alone have furnished me with ample amusement; as it was, I felt quite busy with so much to enjoy, and only seemed to fear that I could not look about with enough energy to observe everything.

CAPE RAOUL.

CHAPTER II.

Night Alarm.—Squall.—Storm Bay.—Lose Topmasts.—Approach to Hobarton.—Cast Anchor.—Mount Wellington.—Scenery round Newtown.— Gardens. — Hobarton Society. — Theatre. — Melodramas.

I HAD been asleep some hours that night, when I was awakened by a strange and terrific noise; and instantly knew, though I had never heard the sound before, that it was the violent flapping of a sail blown out of the ropes. Another and another quickly followed, and buffeted about with a noise like thunder; and the added hubbub of voices and

hurried footsteps on deck told me that some serious disaster had occurred. I thought, with fear and trembling, of the iron-bound coast which I had seen so near to us at sunset, and for once found no comfort in my husband's attempts to reassure me, when I knocked at the bulk-head of his cabin to know what was the matter, but helplessly wept over my sleeping baby, expecting each moment some fearful crisis; nor did my instinctive terror much exaggerate the peril we were in. The captain of the vessel had scarcely been seen out of his berth since the day we sailed, and with only half a crew, and those very ignorant of their duty, it may well be imagined that the ship could not at any time be properly worked; but on this particular night, although bad weather had been anticipated, only one man and a boy composed the "watch;" and both these were shut up in the caboose drinking coffee, when a violent squall struck the vessel, with all her canvas set, blew the sails from the bolt-ropes, and threatened to end our voyage somewhat speedily on the rocks of Cape Raoul, where several vessels with every soul on board had perished before. The night was dark, with a dense fog, and the cliffs were *only a mile to leeward.*

I believe we owe our lives, so far as mortal aid availed, to the promptitude and skill of one of the passengers, Captain Millett (master of an American merchantman), who, when the squall struck the vessel, rushed on deck, and gave all the necessary orders and assistance to restore something like discipline amidst the confusion and riot on board.

At last, for I thought that dreadful night was interminable, the morning dawned;—we were in Storm Bay, which I shall ever think very accurately named;—the weather dark, thick, and squally, with incessant rain. The vessel's deck was so ill-joined that the dirty water dripped through the chinks all over my bed; and, as I lay reading, something dark fell into the border of my cap: thinking it a drop of mud, I snatched off the cap and gave it to the servant, when, to my horror, I discovered that it was an enormous* centipede which had fallen upon me, a hideous, many-jointed, many-legged green creature, about three inches long, with a forked tail, and a railroad rapidity of progression. My horror in this instance was soon changed to thankfulness that the dangerous reptile had fallen

* Enormous *here*, but I am told these amiable-looking creatures thrive best in India, and there grow to the length of a foot or fourteen inches, and as thick as one's finger!

where it did; for my happy little child, on whom it might have dropped, lay sleeping close beside me, and the bite of the centipede is often more venomous and painful than even the sting of a scorpion.

As the weather got slightly better, I went on deck, but all around was very dreary; the fog hung about, and wind and rain came in fitful gusts. Whilst I sat, vainly trying to make out something of the surrounding scenery, Mr. Meredith and several of the other passengers remarked to the captain, who had "turned out" at last, that another squall was coming; and indeed I could distinctly see the ruffled and foaming water rapidly approaching the ship.

"The masts will go, unless you take in sail," said some one, growing nervous at the apathetic supineness of the captain, who, lazily gazing aloft, and then resettling himself on a hen-coop, muttered that he "didn't know—didn't think they would," and accordingly no change was made.

"*You* had better go below," said my husband, leading me to the companion, and before I had reached the cabin, there was a loud crash—the rattle of falling rigging and blocks knocking about, quickly followed by a repetition of the same sounds,

as the main and mizen topmasts successively went over the side. Such an accident a few hours before would probably have been fatal; but now, being in smooth water, it was only productive of a little bustle and discussion.

The bad weather and total discomfort of the latter portion of our voyage prevented my enjoying the fine scenery of the Derwent, as we approached Hobarton, sailing past Bruni Island and Iron-pot Island Lighthouse.

The situation of the town is the most beautiful that can be conceived—on the rising banks of the noble Derwent, with green meadows, gardens, and cultivated land around it, interspersed with pleasant country residences and farms; and, above and beyond all, the snowy mountain peaks soaring to the very clouds. At length we cast anchor. The rattle of the chain-cable must always be a welcome sound at such a time, but perhaps our recent hair-breadth 'scapes lent a still pleasanter tone to its rough music, which at the moment eclipsed, in my estimation, the choicest concerto ever composed; and we immediately went ashore, most thankful and delighted to step once more on land.

The great difference between Sydney and Ho-

barton struck me as forcibly during my first ten minutes' walk as after a longer acquaintance; and, in point of pleasantness, I must certainly award the palm to the latter. It is a much smaller place than Sydney, but its home-like English aspect at once won my preference.

Our next fortnight passed happily among relatives whom I had not seen since childhood, and in a cool breezy climate, that reminded us of April in England; the weather was too showery to admit of so much out-door amusement as I could have wished; still, the cool moist greenness everywhere was most refreshing and cheering to me; the little gardens before and between many houses in the middle of the town, with their great bushes of geraniums in bloom, were all full of sweet English spring flowers, looking happy and healthy, like the stout rosy children that everywhere reminded me of HOME; so different to the thick white complexions and tall slender forms so prevalent in New South Wales. The houses, too, at least the few I entered during our short sojourn, were more snug than showy, as if the English attribute of comfort more especially belonged to them. In the streets, carriages and equestrians were less numer-

ous than in Sydney, and I found that here it was not only believed possible, but positively "fashionable," for ladies to walk about; an improvement upon Sydney customs, which is in a great measure attributable to the climate. The shops were numerous and good, and the buildings neat and substantial, chiefly of brick, but many of the newer ones of cut stone. Some of the more suburban streets, or rather the suburban ends of them, consisting of good detached houses standing in nice gardens, and adorned by verandas covered with lovely plants, are very pleasant, commanding fine views of the harbour; and from every point I visited, Mount Wellington (or Table Mountain) forms the crowning glory of the landscape. Rising immediately behind the town to the height of 4200 feet, with its summit of basaltic columns covered with snow more than half the year, its aspect is one of ever-varying, but never-decreasing grandeur. Whether it was wreathed in fleecy vapours, dark with rolling clouds, or stood out clear and sunlit against the blue morning sky, I was never weary of gazing on this magnificent object.

A stream flowing from the mountain through a picturesque ravine and valley, supplies the town

with water, turning a number of mills of various kinds in its course. To a botanist, Mount Wellington must be a treasury of gems, many rare and beautiful plants inhabiting its wild and almost inaccessible glens and ravines. The ascent of the mountain is long, and was formerly very fatiguing; but the formation, for a considerable distance, of a road passable for horses, has greatly reduced the difficulty. Several unfortunate persons who at various times have imprudently attempted the ascent without a guide, have never returned, nor has any vestige of them ever been discovered; most probably they have fallen into some of the deep chasms and fissures, and, if not killed instantly, have lingered awhile, and died of starvation. The view from the summit is described as surpassingly grand and beautiful, as indeed it must be, from its great altitude and the varied and picturesque scenery around.

I have been frequently told that the real Waratah is found on Mount Wellington, and have since seen several specimens of the flower mistaken for it—very different and inferior indeed to my gorgeous favourite of the Blue Mountains. The Tasmanian Waratah is a shrub or bushy tree, with handsome

dark-green foliage, and bright red flowers of loosely-clustered trumpet florets, scarcely so large as an English woodbine.

We passed the chief part of our sojourn at Newtown, in the environs of Hobarton, where many of the wealthier merchants, government officers, and professional men have tasteful residences. The church and the Queen's Orphan Schools are large and handsome buildings; in the latter, children of both sexes are clothed and educated*.

The scenery around Newtown is the most beautiful I have seen on this side the world—very much resembling that of the Cumberland Lakes: the broad and winding estuary of the Derwent flows

* The children received into the Queen's Orphan Schools are those of prisoners, male or female, undergoing probation or sentence, orphans, and children deserted by their parents; the former are admitted by order of the Comptroller-General of Convicts, the latter through the Colonial Secretary, with the authority of the Lieutenant-Governor. The prisoners' children are paid for by the British Government, the orphans and deserted children by the Colonial Government. There are usually between 400 and 500 children in the schools; when old enough, they are apprenticed as servants or to some useful trade. They are superintended and instructed by the following officers—a superintendent, at 500*l.* per annum; a chaplain, at 50*l.*; a physician, at 150*l.*; a purveyor, at 120*l.*; a teacher of psalmody, at 50*l.*; a schoolmaster, at 150*l.*; a matron, at 50*l.*; a Roman Catholic master, at 35*l.*; a matron of female school, at 130*l.*; a schoolmistress, at 60*l.*; a Roman Catholic schoolmistress, at 60*l.* The expense of each child, including maintenance, clothing, pay of officers and servants of every description, and repair of buildings, averages from 10*l.* to 12*l.* per annum.

between lofty and picturesque hills and mountains, clothed with forests, whilst at their feet lie level lawn-like flats, green to the water's edge. But the most English, and therefore the most beautiful things I saw here, were the hawthorn hedges; those of sweetbriar, which are, I think, more general, did not please me half so well, not having so much of common country home life about them.

It seemed like being on the right side of the earth again, to see rosy children with boughs of flowering "May," and to feel its full luscious perfume waft across me. Let no one who has always lived at home, enjoying unnoticed the year's bounty of rainbow-tinted blossoms, fancy he knows the full value of English flowers, or the love that the heart can bear for them. I thought I always held them in as fond admiration as any one could do, but my delight in these hawthorn hedges proved to me how much my regard had strengthened in absence; and as I recalled to mind the wide brown deserts I had lately left, with their miles of "post and rail," or more hideous "log" and "dead-wood" fences, and then took an imaginary glance over the green hawthorn hedges and elm-shaded

lanes of my own beautiful native land, I heartily wished that all dwellers in her pleasant country places could only know and feel what a paradise they inhabit!

I am often glad that I spent the first year of my antipodean life in New South Wales, for now many things which I should not have observed had I arrived here in the first instance, are sources of great delight to me, as being so much more English than in the larger colony, and I could fancy myself some degrees nearer home.

In the Tasmanian gardens are mulberries, cherries, currants, raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, apples, pears, quinces, medlars, plums of all kinds, and peaches in abundance, growing well and luxuriantly. Our forest trees, too, thrive admirably here, and walnuts, filberts, and hazelnuts are becoming much more common. Vines also succeed in sheltered aspects, but not better than in many parts of England; the summer-frosts to which this climate is liable frequently cut off plants which in Britain can be grown with certainty. Even potatoes are, in some districts, considered a very precarious crop from this circumstance, and, except in situations near the sea-shore, are often nipped by the

frosts at night, although the weather in the day-time is as warm as in an English June.

The Government Gardens here, although not comparable with those at Sydney, are finely situated on the sloping shore of the Derwent, and charmed me by their verdant and shady aspect. They are—for I must again repeat my oft-used term of praise—they are *English*-looking gardens, not rich in glowing oranges, scarlet pomegranates, and golden loquats, nor stored with the rare and gorgeous blossoms of India, but full of sweet homely faces and perfumes. Great trees of a lovely blush rose were in full bloom at the time of my visit, looking so like the rose-trees of olden days at home, that I could scarcely believe them the growth of the opposite side of the world.

The domain adjoins the gardens, and is laid out in pleasant drives among the groves of native trees. We witnessed there the ceremony of laying the first stone of a new Government House, on a spot commanding views of the Derwent and the surrounding beautiful scenery. A collation was provided on the occasion by the Lieutenant-Governor and Lady Franklin, in a pretty rustic lodge near the site of the new mansion, and some

of the guests availed themselves of the presence of an excellent military band to have quadrilles on the grass, or rather in the dust, for the turf was something of the scantiest.

At the period of which I am writing, Hobarton was certainly not in advance of Sydney in point of society or intelligence, and the constant efforts of Sir John and Lady Franklin to arouse and foster a taste for science, literature, or art, were more often productive of annoyance to themselves, than of benefit to the unambitious multitude. The coarse and unmanly attacks made in some of the public papers on Lady Franklin, whose kindness and ability, even if not appreciated at their full value, ought at least to have met with gratitude and respect, were most disgraceful. Unhappily the perpetual petty squabbles and quarrels which seem to form an indispensable part of all small communities, and were especially rife in this little fraction of a world, occupied its attention too exclusively to admit of any great interest being felt in subjects not immediately connected with individual success or advantage. That there might always be found exceptions to this rule is most true, but their good influence, like the light of a few stars in a clouded

sky, only served to make the surrounding intellectual gloom more apparent.

Among the young ladies, both married and single, in Tasmania, as in Sydney, a very "general one-ness" prevails as to the taste for dancing, from the love of which but a small share of regard can be spared for any other accomplishment or study, save a little singing and music; and Lady Franklin's attempts to introduce evening parties in the "conversazione" style were highly unpopular with the pretty Tasmanians, who declared that they "had no idea of being asked to an evening party, and then stuck up in rooms full of pictures and books, and shells and stones, and other rubbish, with nothing to do but to hear people talk lectures, or else sit as mute as mice listening to what was called good music. Why could not Lady Franklin have the military band in, and the carpets out, and give dances, instead of such stupid preaching about philosophy and science, and a parcel of stuff that nobody could understand?"

The performances at the neat little theatre in Hobarton are of a better order than the colonies can generally boast, and most romantic and heart-stirring are the titles of the melodramatic pieces usually

represented there. I often regretted our distance from town when I saw such announcements as "THE MAID OF GENOA, or THE BANDIT MERCHANT, with the celebrated BROAD-SWORD COMBAT and HIGHLAND FLING *in the Second Act;*"—the introduction of apparent anomalies being made much on the pump-and-tub principle of the immortal Crummles. Sometimes half a page of a colonial paper is filled with startling hints of each scene, plentifully peppered with stars, dashes, notes of exclamation, and gigantic italics, quite distracting to read in a quiet country home, amidst peaceful woods; and to know the while, that people in town may go and "sup full of horrors" with "The Convict Captain, or the Nun of Messina;"—have their very heartstrings lacerated by "The Broken Dagger, or the Dumb Boy of the Pyrenees;"—and sit in petrified and agonizing terror to behold the woes of the "The Bandit's Victim, or the Black Caverns of St. Bruno!"

Perhaps it is scarcely fair to send forth such agitating advertisements into far away nooks of the forest, where their temptations are all unavailing. But wonderful is the serenity with which repeated disappointment enables the mind to endure even

such privations! Recently one or two of Shakspeare's tragedies and some good modern plays have been got up very respectably, and last year the announcement of a pantomime sounded cheerily in our ears, like a faint echo of our childhood's laughter; but we afterwards found that its subject was wholly made up of local and personal allusions. The superior success of melodramas over the higher order of dramatic representations, affords an evidence as to public taste which needs no comment. The frightful amount of *snobbishness* which prevails here among those who might really well dispense with the feverish terror of being said or thought to do anything "ungenteel" or "unfashionable," is adverse to the interests of the theatre; and accordingly the patronage vouchsafed by the alarmed exclusives is lamentably small.

CHAPTER III.

The Hunt.—Public Amusements.—Public Decorum and Morality.—Prisoner Population.—"Assignment System."—"White Slavery."—Magistrates.—"Probation System."—Experience in Prisoner-Servants.—Their length of Service.—Their Attachment and Good Faith.

As balls must infallibly be popular in a place where everybody dances, so must races claim a large share of patronage where everybody rides, or is in some manner interested in the quality and value of horses; and accordingly Hobarton, Launceston, Campbell-town, Oatlands, and other places in the colony, have their annual meetings, where "cups," "ladies' purses," "town plates," "sweepstakes," and such like exciting prizes, are gallantly striven for, and fairly won, often by gentlemen-riders, and horses worthy of them.

Hunting is also a favourite diversion, and occasionally the newspapers put forth most grandiloquent narratives purporting to be communications from

"correspondents," detailing the exploits of the "field," which usually consist of galloping over a rough country after two or three couple of hounds (a kind of "scratch pack"), which drive before them a poor tame deer, one of the few imported into the colony, and placed at the disposal of the hunt, by owners more liberal than humane. When the poor creature is completely exhausted, it is rescued from the hounds for future torments, and again and again chased to the very verge of existence, by the noble and Christian worthies who enjoy the cruel sport. Perhaps I may be told that deeds quite as cruel are considered "sport" at home, and encouraged by the highest sanction; but that does not in the least convince me that all the bad habits of an old country should be scrupulously transplanted to a new one, whilst so many of the good ones remain forgotten; and assuredly the absurd custom of *hunting*, with all the show and pretence of earnest pursuit, a gentle tame creature that can scarcely be *driven* away, would be "more honoured in the breach than the observance."

One of these cruel exhibitions occurred only a week before our arrival, as I am informed by a person who shared the "sport" with about sixty others,

which ended in the poor tame stag being worried to death by the dogs, its antlers having caught in a low tree, and entangled it: knowing that its longer life would but have led to greater sufferings, I rejoice that it was killed.

A kangaroo is sometimes hunted as a substitute for the old country fox, and, being a wild and swift creature, is said to afford excellent sport.

The dingo of New South Wales, so generally hunted there, is, I rejoice to say, wholly unknown in Tasmania.

Public balls, concerts, regattas, and horticultural shows, are also frequent, and attended fully, and most respectably. I know of no place where greater order and decorum is observed by the motley crowds assembled on any public occasion than in this most shamefully slandered colony: not even in an English country village can a lady walk alone with less fear of harm or insult than in this capital of Van Diemen's Land, commonly believed at home to be a moral pest-house, where every crime that can disgrace and degrade humanity stalks abroad with unblushing front.

The unfounded assertions which have been made and believed in England for some years respecting

the moral and social condition of this colony, are most astonishing: how, why, and from whom they have originated, I am at a loss to conjecture; but that they are, for the most part, cruelly, scandalously false, I know.

Not in the most moral circles of moral England herself is a departure from the paths of propriety or virtue more determinedly or universally visited by the punishment of exclusion from society, than in this "Penal Colony;" nowhere are all particulars and incidents of persons' past lives more minutely and rigidly canvassed, than in the "higher circles" of this little community; and nowhere are the decent and becoming observances of social and domestic life more strictly maintained. One fact, familiar to hundreds here, may well illustrate this assertion. I select this particular instance, because the parties have now left the colony, and whilst in it occupied a prominent station. A lady, the wife of a military officer of high rank, had for some years held that place in society to which her husband's influential position, and her own right as a gentlewoman, entitled her. She was visited and courted, and might select her own associates from the best families here, until, one unlucky day, there

came to the colony a person who professed to be intimately acquainted with this lady's "birth, parentage, and education," and somewhat officiously proceeded to set forth in various companies a narrative of some long-past error of her early youth; whether false or true, nó one paused to ascertain, nor to ask themselves who, amongst them all, could, if similarly attacked, withstand such (possibly) unfounded assertions. Her correct and unblemished conduct during her sojourn here availed nothing; but one and all of her former devoted friends fell away, and refused to hold any further communion with her. Is it possible to believe that this could have been the case, were moral feeling in Van Diemen's Land at the low ebb generally represented?

A residence here for the last nine years, and an intimate acquaintance during that time with the habits and usages of the higher and middle ranks, as well as of the free labouring population of the country places, may, I think, in some measure qualify me to judge how far the sweeping condemnations of the few, are borne out by the demeanour of the many; and now, in all honest faith and truth, I declare them to be every whit

as unjust to the people of Tasmania as they would be if cast upon those of the same rank in England. And as, in days of yore, the doughty champion of slandered virtue flung into the lists his mailed gauntlet, or the glorious Bombastes hung aloft his invincible boots; even so, in these modern days of more wordy, but not less mortal strife, do I gently lay down my black silk mitten in the cause of fair and wronged Tasmania!

Nor will I quit the subject thus entered upon, without a few words on behalf of those whose friends are too few in number to allow the silence of one willing voice, however feeble, when aught *can* be said for them. I allude to the numerous prisoners of the Crown, now forming so large a portion of our population, and respecting whom so much discussion has of late arisen, and so little truth been elicited. It was not my purpose to touch upon this matter so early in these pages, because at the time of which I am writing, I had not had the opportunities of forming an opinion which I have since had; but having alluded to the subject, it is perhaps best to anticipate the lapse of time so far, and briefly glance over the general question.

The transportation of British criminals to Van Diemen's Land was, as is well known, continued for many years (and until 1842) under the "assignment system;" the prisoners brought in each ship being "assignable" to private service as soon as they arrived. The greater portion of them, therefore, were immediately removed and distributed among different masters in distant places, and with small probability that they would again be brought in contact with their former partners in crime—thus effecting at once the first great step towards reformation, in the breaking up of old and evil connections and associations. The majority became speedily engaged in various ways, chiefly in pastoral or agricultural pursuits, or clearing land; nearly all their fellow-labourers being persons of a like class, but in whom at least a partial improvement had already taken place; and with these they too went on, labouring in occupations or trades they did understand, or learning those they did not. They had huts to live in (which were so far superior to the wretched cabins of many labourers at home that they kept out wind and rain), as much fuel as they chose to cut for themselves, abundant rations of good and wholesome food, and

a certain allowance of clothing, boots, and bedding, fixed by Government.

After serving thus for three, four, or five years, according to the length of their original sentence, they were, if well-conducted and recommended, allowed a "ticket-of-leave," which enabled them to quit their first master, if so disposed, and hire themselves for wages to any one else in the colony who was eligible as an employer of convicts; the police magistrate of the district granting them a "pass" or certificate of permission to proceed to any other specified place. This stage of their punishment appears to have been attended with great success, restoring to them, as a reward for past amendment, enough of independence to arouse their feeling of self-respect and encourage them to continue improving, whilst it reserved power in the hands of the authorities for future rewards or punishments. So manifest are the advantages of this part of the system, that the settlers prefer ticket-of-leave men as servants to any other class, and if the periods of their being such were allowed to arrive sooner and be of longer duration, the change would in most cases benefit the men materially, and tend, by habituating them to the good

conduct they then practise, to render more safe and certain their ultimate reformation.

After remaining the allotted number of years in the ticket-of-leave class, the deserving convicts usually received a "conditional pardon," which permitted them the range of the Australian colonies; and to some was granted a "free pardon," which generally found them fully prepared to keep and value the liberty it bestowed.

To this system it has of late been fashionable to attach the term "white slavery," and other opprobrious epithets. Although doubtless susceptible of great improvement, (as what human scheme is not?) the results were in the main highly satisfactory, and precisely what the Home Government and all humane persons desired they should be, namely, the conversion, in five cases out of six, of idle unprincipled outcasts into industrious trustworthy servants, and the redemption of thousands, who (not strong enough in good to resist evil entirely, yet with the better impulses of their nature far over-balancing the worse) would, if they had remained at home, after a first offence, have been reduced in their degradation to suffer the contagious influence of spirits more wicked than themselves,

and so have sunk gradually but surely downwards to the lowest depths of vice. Here, removed from the first crushing grief of disgrace, and seeing before them the prospect of rising again, and of building for themselves a new character above the ruins of the old, all the latent good in them springs into action; and, in very many instances, a life of honest industry and an old age of decent comfort have succeeded a youth of vice and crime.

For this system to produce its full amount of good in the men, there must needs be the requisite qualifications of common sense, probity, and humanity in the masters; and to ascertain and decide who are and who are not really eligible as such, requires greater diligence and more impartiality than Government agents are often found to possess. Bad masters and severe dishonest magistrates have devoted more men to live as bushrangers, and to die on the scaffold, than any inherent depravity of their victims. When the choice of persons to fill the solemn and responsible offices of justices of the peace was guided, as it *was* here, not by worth, fitness, or respectability, but by their very reverse—when servility became the requisite qualification for the man who should be pleasing to a governor—

wretched indeed was the prospect of the unfortunate prisoner dragged before such a magistrate, and little indeed had *justice* to do with the proceedings, which wholly depended on the venal character of the man's master, not of himself. If his master was a useful tool of the governor, he might fix the precise punishment he chose to have inflicted; if, on the other hand, he was an honest unpurchaseable person, his servant, however guilty, was either dismissed unpunished, or removed from his service. Such things, and worse than these, were of daily occurrence, but are happily now far less frequent; and I believe the lingering remnants which are still found only need exposure to insure removal.

In 1842 the old method of "assignment" was replaced by the "probation system;" and the prisoners, instead of being taken into private service direct from the ship, were subjected to a probationary period of (supposed) hard labour and instruction, which appears to have been *intended* by the Home Government to advance their reformation, to render them more useful afterwards as servants, and to benefit the colony meanwhile by the great amount of labour available for the execution of public works. These were good intentions, but

the officers appointed to carry them out failed signally in their task; some from determined perversity and unpopularity, some from inability, and more from distaste and inattention: and then the herding together of hundreds of criminals of all classes and grades in notorious idleness, made those who were really bad tenfold worse—and even men naturally willing and diligent lapsed into apathetic drones; so that, when they became eligible for service, they were found far less useful and promising than those used to be who were assigned direct from the ships.

To all persons connected with the colony, this will appear an useless repetition of things as familiar as one's alphabet; but I do not write for colonial readers—I can tell *them* nothing that they may not equally well discover for themselves, if disposed to take the pains. I write to communicate such information to general readers in England as I believe many are deficient in, and, not being ambitious of seeming learned myself, would rather repeat many things that everybody knows, than omit one which some require to learn. I wish to convey to others the veritable impressions made on my own mind by the condition and character

of the convict population here, and I could not do so intelligibly without some slight sketch of their general position.

I have now lived above nine years in the colony, the wife of a "settler," and the mistress of a "settler's" home, and during that time we have been served by prisoners of all grades, as ploughmen, shepherds, shearers, reapers, butchers, gardeners, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, shoemakers, house-servants, &c., &c., and (with one or two exceptions) served as well and faithfully as we could desire. What more could be said by any farmer's wife at home? Are all English labourers blameless? I can only call to mind one instance of known dishonesty among our many men-servants (that of a groom who stole some wine), and I believe that acts of petty theft are far less common among them than among the generality of servants at home. Many persons here could and would, if required, give the same evidence which I now do; but I prefer adducing a few facts from my own knowledge, as proof that transportation to these colonies *is*—always excepting the probation system—productive of reformation to many who otherwise would, in all probability, have been utterly lost.

Five, ten, and fifteen years are common periods for prisoner-servants to remain in the same service, before and after their conditional pardon; and I lately heard of one who has for *twenty-eight* years lived with another master in a situation of great trust.

My husband's father, Mr. George Meredith, and himself, have now on their estates five old servants, four of whom have been in their family since 1826, and one since 1825, the latter being until lately overseer on a large agricultural farm. One of the four before-named was once an overseer for many years, and now rents a farm and flock from my husband—his wife having joined him eighteen or twenty years ago, with their family, now grown up and married; the second was in like manner gradually promoted from one post to another till he married, became a superintendent, and then a tenant; the third, a good workman in an useful trade, has received a free pardon, is now also a tenant of my father's, and working for himself; and the fourth, after being employed, since he became free, in whaling, sawing, splitting, and divers other avocations, has, for the last eight years, been cook and "major domo" in our own house, where his faith-

ful attachment and incorruptible honesty are appreciated as they deserve. At the very time I am writing, he and a "ticket-of-leave" gardener are the only male persons in our lonely house (Mr. Meredith being absent in town), and I feel no more, perhaps even less, fear of attack or molestation, than I should in the middle of London: firstly, because I have no idea that robbers will come; and, secondly, because I know that, if they did, I and my children would be defended to the uttermost by *these very prisoner-servants;* and I think it must be very evident, that the country cannot be the den of horrors it has of late been painted, where a female only *so* protected can sit in her quiet country house, forty miles from the nearest village, with doors and windows left open the whole day through, and sleep safely and peacefully at night, without a bar or bolt or shutter to a single window, every room being on the ground floor.

I have only particularised a *few* instances of long service, but I could enumerate numbers of men who have lived in the same family ten, fifteen, eighteen years, as trusted and respected servants; some who have grown old and died on the same establishment. Surely such distinct indisputable

facts as these are more worthy of credence, and a safer guide to the truth, than the vague generalizing denunciations now so commonly dealt forth by the slanderers of the colony. If I were to note all the corroborative evidence that occurs to me, I should fill my little book with it; in no place that I ever knew at home are houses and families left so totally unprotected and in such perfect safety as here. In a lone cottage, seven miles from our own, there lives, at this very time, a lady, an educated gentlewoman, and her four young children—the eldest only eleven—without even a man-servant in or near the place, all being with their master on a distant farm: all the neighbouring settlers have numerous prisoner-servants, yet she lives undisturbed.

I will now quit this subject for the present, assured that if my counter-statement has no other good effect, it will at least enable my friends to journey on with me more pleasantly than if haunted by those frightful anticipations for my personal safety which the reports of the croakers must have awakened.

CHAPTER IV.

Journey to Swan Port.—Restdown.—Richmond.—"The Grand Stand."—Colonial Roads.—Pic-nic Dinner.—A "Sticker-up."—Jerusalem.—Native Names.—Halt in the Forest.—Free Roads.—Road-Gangs.—Transit over Gullies.—Eastern Marshes.—An Invasion.—Lonely Houses.—Organ of Locality.

OUR final destination was Great Swan Port, at the head of Oyster Bay, on the east coast. We commenced our journey thither by a short stage, first crossing the Derwent in the ferry-boats, ourselves in one, and our horses and vehicle in another. Colonial country roads are not calculated for four-wheeled carriages; Mr. Meredith therefore purchased in Hobarton a broad, stout, colonial-built conveyance, an ingenious variety of the gig species, with a seat behind for a servant, which seemed fully capable of enduring all the trying exertions of the journey.

We drove from the ferry to Risdon (properly, I believe, Restdown), a very lovely spot, and the resi-

dence of one of my husband's oldest and most valued friends (T. G. Gregson, M.L.C.). I had not seen so beautiful a view, since I left England, as that commanded by the windows of his dining-room. Mount Wellington is here, as in Hobarton, the chief object in the landscape, whilst the broad bright Derwent, enlivened by sailing and steam-vessels, and skirted by green slopes and meadow-like flats, adds greatly to the beauty of the scene. The greater verdure of the forest trees in Van Diemen's Land, than of those in New South Wales, here struck me forcibly.

We lingered so pleasantly with our kind friends, that it was not until the afternoon of the following day that we set forth to make another short stage, and this was a very pleasant one, being for the most part over a fine, newly-made Government road. From the summit of Grass Tree Hill we had a most beautiful view of the town and harbour, bright in the full radiance of the afternoon sun.

Great numbers of the singular "grass trees" (*Xanthorrea arborea*), of all ages and growths, short, tall, straight, and crooked, each with its long tressed head of rushy leaves, gave a peculiar character to the steep and rocky hills between which

we passed, and created an amusing variety in the otherwise monotonous near scenery.

We proceeded to Richmond, a place named, I imagine, in true Antipodean fashion, from its utter lack of all likeness to its charming old-country namesake. It is a squarely-planned township, situated in a flat valley, with a neat square-towered church and square formal houses dispersed about its incomplete streets. A very square many-windowed inn, seeming very new, very roomy, and very empty, looked at us as we passed with as imploring an expression as might be assumed by an inn of its great pretensions and stony dignity; but fortunately we were not destined to test its capabilities, having accepted the proffered hospitality of the then police magistrate of Richmond, who, being a geologist and a virtuoso, afforded us an agreeable evening in the examination of his various collections. Many of the limestone fossils I saw here were new to me, but as their possessor purposed forwarding a characteristic collection either to the British Museum or the Geological Society, the *savans* at home are doubtless acquainted with them ere this.

Our friend's gatherings in the paths of science

being somewhat extensive, the room in which my maid slept was plentifully stored with choice and rather bulky fossil specimens, and I had no easy task, next morning, in striving to compose the feelings of the terrified and indignant damsel, who declared she "had lain all amongst skillintons and dead men's bones, as bad as vaultses under churches." She had not observed the horrors over night, but was quite positive they *were* "death's-heads and cross-bones," for she had had such "horrid odorous dreams." At length I succeeded in calming her perturbation, and she resumed the charge of the "young *Erkerluss*" (Hercules), as she termed my bouncing baby.

On setting forth, our kind host directed us to proceed along a new road, or rather track, for some distance, our beacon being "the grand stand" on the racecourse, which was shortly to appear on our left hand. As we drove on, I carefully looked about for at least a humble imitation of the buildings usually erected for such purposes—some neat little summer-house affair, perhaps, with a white roof stuck aloft on white posts—but no such thing appeared. At length, Mr. Meredith, from his knowledge of the country, was convinced that our

route would be wrong, if pursued further in the direction we were then going; and on looking around again most intently, we discovered a small post-and-rail *pen*, of common split timber, neither smoothed nor painted, but bearing a tolerably near resemblance to a temporary pigstye, and this was "The Grand Stand!" I afterwards remembered having seen the one at Paramatta, which, though far superior to this, was only calculated to hold some half-dozen persons, and was framed in the same rough and unpolished style.

The road now became quite colonial, that is, execrably bad, and the scenery too monotonous to divert my attention for a moment from the misery of the rough jolting we suffered, and from my cares lest every shock should disturb or hurt my baby, whom I dared not trust in the maid's arms for fear she might drop him out whilst saving herself from one of the incessant jolts, which threatened fractures and dislocations at every step.

In the afternoon we reached a solitary public-house, where we purposed resting for an hour, but finding a large party of rather riotous guests already in possession of its wretched little rooms, we hastened on for a short distance, and paused on the

next hill, where the horses were tethered to graze, and we soon made a fire to grill our cold meat and warm baby's food; and so, under the shade of some sombre gum trees, had a pleasant pic-nic sort of repast, far more to my taste than a sojourn in the unpromising dingy little hostel we had left.

Here I was first initiated into the bush art of "sticker-up" cookery, and for the benefit of all who "go a-gipsying" I will expound the mystery. The orthodox material here is of course kangaroo, a piece of which is divided nicely into cutlets two or three inches broad and a third of an inch thick. The next requisite is a straight clean stick, about four feet long, sharpened at both ends. On the narrow part of this, for the space of a foot or more, the cutlets are spitted at intervals, and on the end is placed a piece of delicately rosy fat bacon. The strong end of the stick-spit is now stuck fast and erect in the ground, close by the fire, to leeward; care being taken that it does not burn. Then the bacon on the summit of the spit, speedily softening in the genial blaze, drops a lubricating shower of rich and savoury tears on the leaner kangaroo cutlets below, which forthwith frizzle and steam and sputter with as much ado as if they were illustrious

Christmas beef grilling in some London chop-house under the gratified nose of the expectant consumer. "And gentlemen," as dear old Hardcastle would have said, if he had dined with us in the bush, "to men that are hungry, stuck-up kangaroo and bacon are very good eating." Kangaroo is, in fact, very like hare.

On this occasion, however, as our basket was town-packed, our "sticker-up" consisted only of ham. The evening of this day we reached Jerusalem, and, not having any friends in the holy city, took up our quarters at one of the caravanserais, where we were as little uncomfortable as we could expect to be in a place of such limited accommodation. Jerusalem is a township of far less imposing aspect than Richmond, and the neighbouring scenery is very uninteresting.

The absurdity of giving to new little settlements like this the names of old-world places of renown, always seems to me excessive. Not far away from the new Jerusalem are Jericho and Bagdad; whilst English town and country names abound, and the plain farmhouses of settlers are often called after some of the most magnificent palace-seats of English nobles, making the contrast, which cannot fail

to occur to one's mind, ludicrous in the extreme. I know only three native names of places in this island—Ringarooma and Boobyalla on the north coast, and Triabunna on the east. In New South Wales many of the settlers have had the good sense and taste to preserve the aboriginal names, which are always significant (when understood), and for the most part singularly musical in sound. Such are Paramatta, Wooloomooloo, Illawarra, Wollongong, Wollondilly, Mittagong, Maneroo, Tuggeranong, Mutmutbilly, Yangalara, and many more; whilst some few, it must be owned, are more grotesque than euphonious, for instance, Jerriconoramwogwog, Jininjininjininderry, and Jinjulluk. Yet even these are preferable to the reiterated old names, and at any rate excite no ridiculous comparison between great old things and little new ones.

Our onward road from Jerusalem was worse than any we had hitherto traversed, being deep loose sand mingled with stones of all sizes, and great masses of rock, over which we bumped and jumped and jolted most perseveringly for some miles; the horses being sufficiently tired in dragging us along at a slow foot-pace, and through as uninteresting a

tract of country as can well be conceived. Forests of straggling dingy gum-trees (*Eucalyptus*) were here and there mingled with an equally dingy growth of wattle and honeysuckle-trees (*Acacia* and *Banksia*); the ground bore very little herbage, but was chiefly covered with coarse, harsh, reedy plants, some of which are called "cutting grass," from the extremely sharp edges of the leaves, which cut like glass; so sharp, indeed, that we have had dogs severely hurt in running through them: other and more numerous kinds are less mischievous.

A large tussock of this grass I have often found a very pleasant resting-place, as, by bending sideways a portion of the upper leaves, and seating oneself upon them, they form an elastic cushion, well backed by the remaining upright leaves, and very preferable to a seat on a log, which usually swarms with ants: it is prudent to *poke* the tussock with a stick, before sitting down on it, as snakes are not unfrequently found coiled within.

On such a primitive kind of ottoman I very gladly rested awhile at our usual mid-day halt in the forest, whilst the smoke of our gypsy fire curled sluggishly upward in the still air, and the horses eagerly rolled themselves in the damp marsh

grass that skirted the tiny spring which had made us fix upon this spot for the halt of our little caravan.

Tall gaunt-looking gum-trees, with many straggling far-spreading branches and scanty foliage, towered high above, with streamers of loose bark hanging from all parts of them, sometimes five or more yards long, and waving rustlingly to and fro. At least a fifth part of the trees had either died of natural decay, or been blown down, and lay in all directions; their massive trunks, broken branches, and withered leaves, together with many years' accumulation of fallen bark (which these trees shed annually) covering the earth, and scarcely allowing the lesser plants to struggle up amongst them. A few common shrubs grew here and there with pretty but scanty blossoms; and, beside the precious little spring, a gleam of real green brightened the dreary place, and the few poor reeds and shrubs so fortunate as to dwell within its blessed influence, shot up tall and lithe and verdant, amidst that dry, sapless, lifeless-looking forest.

I was pleased to see some fern here, very similar to the common forest-fern or brake at home; but, instead of growing tall and spreading, it seemed

stunted and crisped with drought, its leaf-tips all brown and brittle, and the stems hard and shrivelled.

We journeyed on through this seemingly endless region of standing and prostrate gum-trees, frequently walking to spare our poor child the motion of the carriage, and having continually, when driving, to turn aside into the uncleared "bush," to travel round some enormous tree which had fallen across the beaten track. How little do the good people in England, whom I have heard grumble outrageously at the sixpences extorted from them by the turnpikes—how very little do they know the value of the roads they so grudgingly help to maintain! If they could possibly enjoy, as we did, the delight of making a journey of 120 miles upon one of these free roads, I think turnpikes would ever after beam upon their charmed eyes as the loveliest objects in the landscape, the ever welcome tokens of level roads and easy drives, of Macadam and civilization.

In the district around Hobarton, and on the direct route to Launceston, the roads are reasonably good, and when the probation system rendered the services of so many thousands of convicts avail-

able to the local Government for the execution of works of public utility, it was generally hoped that in time our colonial highways would be considerably mended, but such expectation has been signally disappointed. Gangs of many hundreds of men have been located about the island in various places, but, as it would appear, with the most careful determination on the part of their directors that their labour should *not* be beneficial to the colonists. Roads were begun, it is true, but generally in such directions as were rarely traversed, and if one over a more frequented part of the country was commenced and carried on successfully for some time, the gangs were almost invariably removed from it when a little further labour would have rendered it essentially serviceable to the neighbourhood. I know positively of more than one instance where a road between two districts was in the course of formation, which, had it been carried through, would have greatly enhanced the value of certain large properties; but because the owners of these were obnoxious, upon political grounds, to the officer then in charge of the convicts, the work was stopped when within a short distance of the proposed terminus (a portion of the

road was left unfinished and wholly impassable), the prisoners' barracks were dismantled and allowed to go to ruin, and the gang removed to a distance, most probably to be kept in idleness; for, as the officer had uncontrolled power, and rather a lengthy list of private feuds, it became extremely difficult to plan a road, in any quarter, which should not either directly or indirectly benefit some of the objects of his undying and vindictive dislike; and hence the very small amount of good effected by a very large amount of power—hence the number of unfinished, almost useless roads and expensive stations and barracks, built at the cost of the Home Government, and left to go to ruin, all over the island—and hence the unpopularity and ultimate failure of the probation system.

A common bush-road cleared of trees and stumps, the latter being too frequently left in the ground, is, if on firm smooth soil, by no means unpleasant, but where rocks intervene, or deep gullies, or the broad stony ford of a river, or a low tract of bog or marshy clay—which the least traffic in wet weather beats up into a slippery tenacious batter-pudding consistency—these, in consequence of no

means being adopted for rendering them moderately passable, become serious impediments, and with such obstacles our colonial bush-roads are replete.

How some of the yawning "gullies" and ravines were passed on our journey, is an enigma to me to this day; for sometimes their banks were so precipitous, that I could with difficulty descend one side and scramble up the other on foot. How the carriage was lowered down and dragged up again, I cannot divine; but my husband and brother, and the good horses, managed it in some mysterious way amongst them, and regularly overtook me as I and my servant walked on before with the child; who, after sleeping through the first three days' easy stages with most exemplary and philosophical indifference to the jolting, now began to intimate that his patience was exhausted, and put in his protest against carriage nursing most determinedly. Still, it was pleasant and comforting to think that we *might* have been far more miserable! and, when growing really weary, distressed, and vexed at our many petty troubles, I used to silence my inward murmurs by the query—

"*Would you prefer going by sea?*" and instantly the all-powerful charm of the dry land reconciled me to all present or future annoyances that our journey might present.

Our resting-place, on the fourth evening of our slow and tiresome pilgrimage, was the house of a settler at the "Eastern Marshes," who, from being the only resident in the neighbourhood, or for miles around, must have his well-known hospitality tried by most of the travellers on this dreary route. Judging from the number we met, these are, fortunately for him, not very numerous; during two days we had only seen two shepherds and their dogs. Our worthy host was an old acquaintance of Mr. Meredith's, and our weary group received every attention and comfort he could possibly provide us; and truly it is no small trial for a quiet little household to be invaded at a moment's notice, or rather with no notice at all, by a whole family party, hungry, thirsty, tired, hot, cold, sick or sleepy, as the case may be, but always troublesome to an incalculable extent, and turning the house upside down to make up cradles for children, and "shake-downs" for gentlemen, and causing, however reluctantly, multifarious orders to go forth for hot

water, cold water, towels, carpet-bags, blankets, driving-boxes, mutton-chops, brandy, milk, slippers, boiled eggs, dry wood, bread and butter, and tea, within half-an-hour driving the bewildered serving-woman nearly beside herself, and making the distracted master glad to escape to the stable to superintend the arrangements for the quadrupedal part of the invading army. Luckily our present kind entertainer was a bachelor, and ourselves not very exacting guests. When there is a wife in the case, I am always trebly grieved at occasioning such a domestic disturbance, being tolerably well able to sympathize in her sufferings. Yet it is not uncommon for such compulsory guests (especially residents in towns), to lay the flattering unction to their souls, that they confer the greatest imaginable favour on an establishment, by turning it inside out; at the same time avowing their conviction that "people in the country are *always* so delighted to see *anybody;*" which is not exactly the correct construction to put upon the almost universal spirit of kind hospitality which prevails among settlers in the Bush, whether rich or poor; the simplicity and regularity of their lives and occupations rendering such interruptions far more serious than people

accustomed to lounge and idle away their days in town can understand. How great a delight it is to welcome to the solitary home in the wilderness, some old and valued friend, and to see the well-known face mingle its silent tales of bygone years with all the newer interests and affections of the present time, can only be known when enjoyed! I believe, in truth, that to appreciate fully and completely the blessings of happy homes, children, friends, and books, a trial of lonely bush-life for a few years is indispensable. Such partial solitude does the spirit good.

I really think that, after seeing the truly lonely houses which we often find in these colonies, I should be puzzled to know where a lonely house could be placed in England! I have in former days seen what I then imagined such, and have read, with an admiring conviction of its truth, my friend Mr. Howitt's eloquent description of "lone country houses" in general, and of some very fearfully lone ones in particular; but I verily begin to disbelieve the whole theory, and am almost prepared to assert that there is not, and cannot be, a lone house in England, and that there is nobody now living who ever lived in or saw such an one there!

Now this homestead on the Eastern Marshes might with some semblance of truth be invested with the ghostly and robbery qualifications of a "lonely house:" it stands all alone by itself, on an extensive tract of low marsh land, which, even at the time of our visit in November*, was all splashy with water, and alive with unimaginable legions of frogs. Beyond the marsh, the forest land, or, to use the settlers' universal term, the "Bush," commences, and spreads away over miles and miles of inhospitable country used for nothing but sheep-runs, usually called sheep-*walks* at home, but in these young countries we are in such haste to "advance" and "go ahead," that, among all other fast things, we must needs have fast sheep, or talk of them as if they were fast, which does as well. Mountains, hills, valleys, ravines—all are wild and trackless as they were thousands of years ago, except where a rude fence of brushwood indicates the boundary-line of different properties, or the narrow thread of a sheep-path winds away amidst the fallen trees and spreading reed-tussocks. No road passes by or anywhere near the place, at least

* November here, corresponding with May in England, is a warm dry month.

none that I could espy: those travellers who go there, find their way by means of some occult science like divination, appertaining, I presume, to the organ of "Locality" in its most perfect development, but which I still venerate in the blindest ignorance; for all forests here, and all parts of them, are to me so exactly alike, that the power of knowing which is the right way to turn round one of many thousand similar trees seems, to my unpractised comprehension, to border on the miraculous.

CHAPTER V.

Journey continued.—Pic-nic Dinner.—Ascent of the Sugarloaf.—Gum-Tree Forests.—Rest on the Mountain.—Descent.—Night Quarters.—Sea Coast.—"Rocky Hills."—Oyster Bay.—Isle des Phoques.—Maria Island.—Probation Gang.—Waterloo Point.—Journey's End.

LEAVING the Eastern Marshes the following morning, we again pursued our way through the Bush, over as wretched roads as heretofore, and by noon had reached the foot of the Sugarloaf Mountain, a most formidable part of our journey.

A high and rugged mountain-tier wholly encompasses the fertile district of Great Swan Port on the land side, rendering it imperative upon us to scale it at some point; and, after much deliberation and many inquiries as to what bridges were broken—*such* bridges too! a Welsh pony would scarcely trust them in their best days—and what gullies were altered by floods, and what new fences now crossed old roads—whether such as could be pulled

down to pass through (the putting up again after passing, being a point of honour with respectable travellers, who do as they would be done by), and where certain slip-rails were to be found, and where we must "look out for the bull-dog that was always loose," and other pleasant little items of preliminary information essential to be acquired;—after all was canvassed, the Sugarloaf route was decided on as the best. My readers will be kind enough to imagine, if they journey with me to the end, what the other routes must be. There was an alternative proposed, of "taking the Thumbs for it"—a part of the ridge with three hummocks called the "Three Thumbs" being sometimes traversed instead of the Sugarloaf; but the latter was finally preferred.

Here then, at the foot of the mountain, we first forded, and then halted beside a beautiful picturesque stream, which, with the whole scene, strongly reminded me of spots in North Wales, or on the Wye above Rhaiddyr—dear old names! how pleasant it is to write them once again, and how almost impossible to believe that thirteen long years have passed over my head since I wrote about them first! Huge rocks here and there interrupted the course of the bright little river, round which it gurgled and foamed

in true trout-stream style; shrubs and trees hung over and dipped into its clear dark shady pools, that reflected in dancing pictures the high and frowning mountain-peaks around; exquisite flowering plants, one a tree-veronica with bright polished foliage, and a profusion of lovely sprays of ultra-marine eye blossoms, grew close beside us, as we spread our repast on the broad flat mossy stones, and with our wine cooling in the river, and our little cups brim-full of the crystal water, we were fast growing luxurious in our notions, when, as if to realize more fully my Welsh mountain reminiscences, a cloud, which I had once or twice glanced at somewhat suspiciously, poured down upon us in a veritable mountain-shower; but it soon passed over, and the sun shone out brightly, making all the little twinkling diamond drops in the flowers glitter and dance as if in enjoyment of our temporary discomfiture.

Luncheon being finished, and knives, forks, cups, and "table service" packed up, I set off, as usual, in advance, with the child and nurse, to climb the mountain on foot; the road being too distinct to be mistaken even by so obtuse a bush-traveller as myself. We plodded on and on, sometimes pausing to listen for the horses or carriage behind, and then

hastening on again, to walk as far as possible before it overtook us, in mercy both to the poor horses and to the child. A most fearful ravine soon yawned before my feet, far deeper and steeper and wider than any yet passed, and with only a crazy bridge of long thin poles thrown across and turfed over. Many of the poles were broken, and most of the turf fallen away, so that it was little more than a net-work of holes; even I could not step lightly and quickly over without risk and fear, and I paused some minutes on the edge, hoping the carriage party would come, that I might know if they attempted to cross, and whether this seeming impossibility would be accomplished, as so many others had been; but hearing nothing approach, we again proceeded on the steepest part of the ascent. Here the road winds to and fro along the ridge of the mountain, and most unaccountably passes nearly over its peak, much in the same style as Major Mitchell's Blue Mountain track. A wide extent of hills and vales, or rather ravines, spread far around and beneath, all robed in dim-hued forests, which in the distance looked brown and rusty, and the nearer portions only displayed the skeleton forms of the universal gum-trees in a more gaunt and un-

pleasing aspect—so gaunt and grim and gnarled were they, with such vicious twists and doublings in their gray-white trunks—such misshapen caricatures of arms and legs scrambling all abroad; such odd little holes and clefts, making squinting eyes and gaping mouths in elvish faces, with scratchy scrubby-looking wigs of dry leaves; and they had altogether so disreputable and uncanny an aspect, that if they had incontinently joined over my head in a Walpurgis dancing party, it would only have seemed a natural and suitable proceeding.

Here and there portions of the rocky cliffs that overhung the road assumed strange and picturesque forms, sometimes draped with creeping plants, or clasped around in a rugged embrace by long-armed forest tree roots, knotted over them like mighty cables. I was growing very weary, and the utterly helpless loneliness of the situation I had so indefatigably walked into, began to impress me with no very cheerful feelings, for there was no human being within call, save my frightened maid, to have offered us assistance, had any of the bushrangers, then said to be numerous in the colony, chanced to pounce upon us. Even the worst of these despe-

radoes are, however, generally respectful and humane towards females. Nevertheless, I grew "horribly afeard," and my efforts to assume an air of courageous indifference were, I have no doubt, most grim and lamentable failures. To return, at all events, would have been useless folly, and to stand still nearly as bad; so on we climbed, still up, up, up, along that ever-turning and, as it seemed, never-ending ascent, and it was not until we had got close to the brow of the mountain that Mr. Meredith and the "caravan" reached us.

A rest on the summit was as needful for the poor horses as it was welcome to me, and a cup of sparkling water from a spring close by was deliciously cool and refreshing to my parched lips as I sat panting "on a log."

And now began the worst part of the day's journey; having with a world of trouble succeeded in getting to the top of the hill, naturally the next thing to be done was to get to the bottom again. We young-country folks never adopt your mean middle courses, or go sneaking round a hill half way down; if a thing *is* to be done, we do it manfully, in the most difficult possible manner, and if people *must* go over mountain-tiers, why of course they

like to make much of the treat, and go as high up as they can! At least such seems to be the principle on which all mountain-roads are laid out in this country.

The road by which we had ascended was a "made" one, and tolerably good; but from the opposite side the pioneers of the wilderness seemed to have shrunk aghast, and left their task in sheer despair. The descent, as I viewed it, seemed all but perpendicular. I know that people skilled in theories and calculations say that an angle of 75° is the steepest ascent that a man can walk up; but as no one that I know of has ascertained the precise degree of slope for bodies to roll down, I cannot in this instance recognise the rule. Certain it is, that our descent of the hill-Sugarloaf might be likened to that of flies creeping down a real one, and the whole broadside of the mountain being thickly strewn with loose sharp stones, was rendered doubly dangerous to traverse. My year's inactivity in New South Wales had spoiled my good old English habits of walking, and I was too much exhausted to crawl further on foot, so I was compelled to cling to the carriage—I cannot say I sat in it, but crouched on the foot-rug, clasping baby in

one arm, whilst I held tightly on with the other, not daring to glance before me at the abyss below. A strong rope was fastened to the back of the vehicle, to which our stalwart brother lent all his weight and strength in holding the carriage back; my maid meanwhile led his horse (much as Mr. Winkle might have done), at the imminent peril of her own toes; and so, with infinite terror and no disaster, we arrived safely at the bottom. Many times in the course of the journey we had recourse to ropes held in the same manner on either side to prevent an upset, for the "sideling" hills in the bush roads not being cut or terraced to form levels, the slope is often too great for a vehicle to traverse without great risk of overbalancing.

During this memorable descent of the Sugarloaf, my attention was called to the beautiful view which at one point appeared over the sombre forest foreground. This was a lovely glimpse of the Pacific Ocean, calm and sunny, with the bold precipitous cliffs of Maria Island rising grandly in the distance, and the more varied outline of the Schoutens stretching away to the north. Beautiful as it was, and long as I could, under other circumstances, have gazed upon it, I felt, and I fear

somewhat ungraciously declared, that the sight of a single chimney of our father's residence—the so desired haven whither we were bound—would have seemed lovelier in my weary eyes at that moment than the most exquisite scenery that mountains and ocean ever composed.

Our day's progress, though occupying from eight in the morning till five in the evening, did not exceed eighteen miles, and ended at a small public-house at Little Swan Port, where a room, not unlike a ship's cabin in size, served us perforce as dining-parlour and dormitory, our brother and the maid being accommodated for the night, one in a loft, and the other on a settee in the landlady's little kitchen.

The clever bed which Goldsmith celebrates as contriving

> "A double debt to pay,
> A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day,"

had a perfect sinecure compared with the little oblong table of our miniature apartment, which, after officiating first in the menial capacity of a wash-hand-stand, and then as a toilet, was enabled, by the aid of a clean white cloth, to figure as a remarkably compact dining-table for three—the

bed, in the character of a sideboard, sharing its somewhat crowded honours; and, after well sustaining the dignity of a "festal board," this accommodating piece of furniture once more subsided into a toilet and wash-hand-stand, previously to its being finally "made up" for the night with cloaks and shawls as a bed for the baby!

The landlord of our inn had been many years in the neighbourhood, and narrowly escaped being one of the victims in the first murderous attack made here by the aborigines on the settlers; but more of this anon. Both he and his wife had long known our family, and were most attentive and obliging. The good woman persisted in loading our little table with plate after plate, heaped up with every description of eatable she could cook, declaring, in spite of all my remonstrances, that she *knew* we must be famished:—toast, mutton-chops, eggs, and fried ham followed each other in quick succession, in company with a mighty tea-pot steaming and fragrant, and a comely mountain of home-baked bread, with English bottled ale and other anti-teetotal beverages. Our repast was, as usual on such occasions, a conglomeration of dinner, tea, and supper, and in this instance com-

prised a display of enough food for at least three sets of such meals.

On taking an out-of-doors survey of our quarters the following morning, I found that the cottage was built in a somewhat singular fashion, a portion of it being continued over a sudden slope in the bank, at the same level as the other parts, and merely supported on thick, rough, upright posts, giving the whole building the appearance of leaning on its elbows to look into the river below. It was also old enough to have acquired a nice mellow colour, with patches of moss and creeping plants about it; and some gay bits of curtain, or an old gown, that fluttered at the casement window, helped out the picturesque so well, that the group of sturdy rosy children beside it made up a sort of living "Gainsborough," quite refreshing to contemplate. A garden, not very neatly kept, but apparently tolerably productive, lay between the cottage and the river, or rather estuary, Little Swan Port being a considerable inlet of Oyster Bay.

Passing this by a wide but not very deep ford, we commenced the last chapter of our pilgrimage, which the execrable roads and the impossibility of

exceeding a very moderate pace with our baby-traveller, had rendered very wearisome.

After we had gained the sea-coast, along which our course now lay, the scenery became most beautiful and striking; and, after skirting the lower portions of the seaward hills for some distance, we gradually ascended a kind of terrace road, very rudely formed along the side of the almost precipitous chain, correctly named "The Rocky Hills." From this place we enjoyed a magnificent view; behind and in front of us appeared the winding mountain road—bad enough to traverse, Heaven knows—but very charming to look at, just the scene for a fine group of melodramatic bandits in ambush behind a rock, or for a string of muleteers, or a band of chamois hunters, or Alpine herdswomen, or any other figures appropriate to a wild rocky mountain pass. High overhead the common forest trees grew in their wonted straggling and fantastic forms; the rocks around us were adorned by luxuriant bushes of a delicate and fragrant wild geranium, with small finely-veined flowers of pale lilac, and large downy leaves, contrasted here and there with the broad-eyed white and yellow everlastings, in their powdery woolly foliage. Over

many of the flat rocks were spread large juicy-green mats of the pretty fig-marigold (*Mesembryanthemum equilaterale*), and in some places long pendent masses of the same plant hung down, curtaining the rugged cliffs in rich living draperies, and shading many a cool little grotto-nook with their heavy solid verdure, and its glorious broidery of bright, glowing, purple, starry flowers, each with its inner sun of pale gold.

Far below our narrow track the surf dashed against the cliffs, its continuous roar reaching us in a hollow murmur, and the bright waters of Oyster Bay, blue as the sky above them, spread forth in the most perfect bay-form I have ever seen. The lofty Schouten promontory, with its long range of craggy granite peaks, and the Schouten Island, equally picturesque, stretching away southwards from the point of the mainland, form the limits of the bay opposite to the Rocky Hills, whilst round the head of this silvery blue dainty nook of ocean lies a fine tract of low land (the estate of Cambria), with densely-wooded tiers of hills rising behind. Southward of the Schoutens the small island called the White Rock, or more generally in maps, "Isle des Phoques," rises

abruptly from the sea. It is not more than a mile and a half in circumference, and was formerly the resort of a great number of seals, which have been almost wholly destroyed; and now the only residents there are the prodigious multitudes of sea-fowl of all descriptions, which inhabit the crags and clefts and strange intricate caverns of this wild and almost inaccessible rock, which rises perpendicularly from the water, and as the waves rise and fall from twenty to thirty feet, the only mode of access for persons visiting it is, to leap from the boat when at the top of a swell, and, lighting barefooted on the slippery rocks, scramble up them—a favourite amusement with my husband some few years ago; and I delight now to hear his vivid descriptions of the nights he has sometimes passed there, watching the seals come in from the sea to suckle their young, listening to the conversation of the "old wigs," as the males are termed, or witnessing their fearful engagements—for they fight tremendously, tearing each other in the most savage manner, till the thick, fat, blubbery skin hangs about them in absolute tatters. At sunset, too, and all night long, the sea-birds come flocking home, uttering their ceaseless cries, and seek-

ing their respective holes and nests with a noisy, bustling, fearless hurry-skurry, not heeding in the least the presence of strangers, but flying against them, or running under their legs. And through the night strange wild sounds are heard—the deep bark of the seals; the screams, cries, and soft musical tones of the birds; the moaning of the wind; and hollow booming and dashing of the sea against the rock, and in and through and all amongst its labyrinthine caves and grottoes, that nothing but a wave or a fish ever penetrated.

Farther to the south is Maria Island, chiefly composed of high cliffs and rocks, which rise at the northern extremity in a nearly perpendicular precipice, called the Bishop and Clerks, of about 1800 feet; the rock is a dark close limestone, and extremely rich in large fossil shells.

Long and weary was our progress over the terrible "Rocky Hills;" for, lovely as was the view around, it could not charm away my almost painful sensations of fatigue, as I stumbled along among the sharp stones and rocks and fallen trees, for to sit in the carriage was even worse, adding an agony of fright to the rough motion. I have often laughed since to think what a deplorable figure we must

have cut; but at the time it was a grave affair enough. Mr. Meredith led the van, piloting the carriage as he best might among the innumerable obstacles that beset it; then came poor little baby George, in the careful arms of his stout uncle, whose horse I led the while; and the maid brought up the rear. In about the worst part of the road we met the wife of a neighbouring settler, calmly seated on a fine old white horse, guiding it steadily over the path, and carrying at the same time an infant, about the age of my own, tucked snugly under one arm, and a sturdy little fellow about a year older on her lap, besides numerous bundles hanging to the pommel. I gazed at her with almost envious admiration and wonder as she rode quietly on, quite composed and at ease, whilst I, with thrice the apparent accommodation, was nigh fainting with fatigue.

At one part of the road we found a gang of men employed in its improvement; forming, in the mean time, greater obstacles than they removed; and so they have continued to be employed, aided by frequent reinforcements of new arrivals, nearly ever since; and still, after nearly nine years, the comparatively trifling task remains unfinished, and

the station is deserted. The mismanagement of this gang was evident to the most casual observer; so notorious was their idleness, that it was a common thing to see them not even pretending to be employed, unless in making arbours of boughs to sit under in the sun! A more sleek-looking, stout, sturdy, lazy fraternity, I cannot conceive possible. This herding together of so many idle men under the pretence of "doing probation," as they call it, must be injurious to the well-disposed among them, and is no punishment to the worthless.

We continued to enjoy the same view of the fine bay, and the opposite mountains, only altered slightly by our change of position as we advanced, losing it occasionally as our road led over the inland ridges of the many jutting points, and regaining it as we returned towards the sea. On one fine sandy beach, where we rested awhile, quantities of huge whales' bones lay scattered about; they were as white as snow, from long exposure to the sun and air. The large joints of the vertebræ make very shapely rustic seats and footstools, when the greasy matter has all passed away from them. I rested on one during our halt, and, as I looked around, could not help fancying what treasures those despised

bones would be in many a fantastic *Londonesque* garden, amidst its rock-work, vases, statues, and flower-pots.

We had now passed all the very bad portions of the road, and, after traversing in tolerable comfort a few more rugged hills, came in view of the little settlement of Swansea, more commonly known in the district as "Waterloo Point," that being the name originally given to it; the first stipendiary magistrate here, Captain Hibbert, 40th Regiment, having served at Waterloo.

The little rocky promontory jutting out into the sea, surmounted by the flagstaff and a few white-washed buildings, including the gaol, police office, and magistrate's cottage, looks at a distance like a small fort; and some mock embrasures, painted on the white walls, have also, when seen from a distance, a right martial aspect. The church, originally built for a school-room, remained for some years a rough unfinished apartment, fitted up with benches, but within the last three years it has been raised in height and handsomely finished. The houses of three publicans and one or two stores were the only other edifices on the "Point" above the rank of huts; and as the soil around is too rocky and

sandy to make gardens, and all the native trees have long since been cut down, these had but a bare and staring appearance.

Our poor horses seemed as well pleased as ourselves at the delightful change from the "Rocky Hills" to a good level road, and trotted gaily along, through the straggling township, and on through another interval of "bush," to the ford of the "Meredith River;" soon after passing which we turned aside from the road, and drove to the door of our father's hospitable mansion, where, in a long quiet sojourn among kind relations, I almost forgot the weary journey I had made to reach them.

CAMBRIA.

CHAPTER VI.

Cambria.—Hedges.—View.—Garden and Orchard.—Fruits.—Flowers. Rabbits.—Black Swans.—Christmas Day.—Pic-nic Parties.—Sponges.—Shrubs and Shells.

THE house at "Cambria" commands an extensive view of large tracts both of "bush" and cultivated land; and, across the Head of Oyster Bay, of the Schoutens, whose lofty picturesque outline, and the changing hues they assume in different periods of the day or states of the atmosphere, are noble adjuncts to the landscape. Below a deep precipitous

bank on the south side of the house flows a winding creek, the outlet of the Meredith River, gleaming and shining along its stony bed, and richly fringed by native flowering shrubs, mingled with garden flowers half-wild, poppies, stocks, wallflowers, and bright-eyed marigolds looking merrily up, amidst thickets of the golden wattle and snowy tea-tree; whilst, on the higher ground, huge old gum-trees stand majestically, spreading wide their white fantastic branches, and shiny yet sombre foliage. At a short distance from the opposite bank of the creek stands a thatched cottage, with its attendant outhouses, partly concealed and shadowed by some particularly fine gum-trees, such as would be deemed highly ornamental even in an English park, for trees of this kind growing singly or in groups on rich land are scarcely recognisable as of the same genus with the gaunt scraggy objects that swarm together in the forests. The sight of this little cottage removes, rather pleasantly, the feeling of loneliness and isolation that generally pervades colonial country-houses, which are most commonly built each in or near the centre of its own estate; but in this instance the river, separating a large farm from a little one, has attracted the owners of

both to place their houses near it. Large tracts of cleared, fenced, and cultivated land form a nearly level plain in front, and towards the north, in which direction the cottage, formerly the residence of our family, peeps from its grove of wattle-trees. Steep but not very lofty hills rise at the back of the Cambria plain, forming a small outpost of the rocky tier that wholly environs the Great Swan Port district on the land side, and, for want of comparatively little labour in road-making, renders either ingress or egress a matter of much fatigue and difficulty.

A large, well-built, cheerful-looking house, with its accompanying signs of substantial comfort in the shape of barns, stackyard, stabling, extensive gardens, and all other requisite appliances on a large scale, is most pleasant to look upon at all times and in all places, even when tens or twenties of such may be seen in a day's journey; but when our glimpses of country comfort are so few and far between as must be the case in a new country, and when one's very belief in civilization begins to be shaken by weary travelling day after day through such dreary tracts as we had traversed, it is most delightful to come once more among sights and

sounds that tell of the Old World and its good old ways, and right heartily did I enjoy them.

The noble veranda into which the French windows of the front rooms open, with its pillars wreathed about with roses and jasmine, and its lower trellises hidden in luxuriant geraniums, became the especial abiding-place of my idleness; as I felt listless and inactive after my year's broiling in New South Wales, and delighted in the pleasant breezy climate of our new home.

Hawthorn hedges greeted me pleasantly again, with their old remembered verdure and fragrant blossoms; and those of gorse, the first I had seen since leaving England, would rival the growth of that sturdy mountaineer even on its native hills. There were many of these live fences, although the less pleasing ones of posts-and-rails, or paling, logs, or brush were necessarily more prevalent; and I found that the *un*accommodations of slip-rails and gates of refractory temper were not wholly peculiar to New South Wales.

Flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, and horses, gave life and interest to my veranda-diorama, and the distant road, half seen, half hidden by the undulating ground, sometimes displayed, in addition to

its common-place traffic of bullock and horse teams, a light cart or jaunting-car, or gig, with its living freight of "settlers" male and female, either journeying to or returning from the little settlement of Swansea, where there are one or two stores of very limited pretensions, and two or three public-houses, all the produce of the chief part of the district being shipped from this place.

A large garden and orchard, well stored with the flowers and fruits cultivated in England, were not among the least of the charms Cambria possessed in my eyes; and the growth of fruit trees is so much more rapid and precocious here than at home, that those only ten or twelve years old appear sometimes aged trees. Apples suffer severely here from the American blight, although some few among the best kinds are wholly exempt from its attacks; the orchard produces so great an abundance, as to afford a considerable quantity of cider every year, which is a very pleasant summer beverage.

Judging from the remarks on cider-making in "Loudon's Encyclopædia of Agriculture," I conceive that our Tasmanian cider is fermented too much, so as to deprive it of too great a proportion

of the saccharine matter; as it is of a very pale colour, and much thinner and more acid than the English, and, except by persons long accustomed to its use, is not drunk without the addition of a large quantity of sugar, which, with a toast and a little nutmeg, makes an extremely pleasant "cider-cup."

Pears succeed excellently, usually bearing an abundance of fine fruit, as do also the medlar, quince, almond, cherry, and all the family of plums, from the portly magnum bonum, looking like the golden fruit of the Hesperides, and demanding to be preserved in syrup, to the luscious bloomy Orleans, delicate green and yellow gages, and the common damson. I have not yet seen the large prune damson in the colony. Seedling peach-trees, which sometimes bear the third year, usually produce an immense quantity of mediocre fruit, useful for tarts and preserves, but the better kinds of peach, together with the apricot and nectarine, are less plentiful. The summer frosts are the direst foes of the gardener and horticulturist in this island; often, when the trees are perfectly clothed with fine blossoms, one night will destroy almost the whole.

Of the smaller common fruits the gooseberry

produces the most certain crop, and bravely sustains its well-won fame in every pleasant shape of pies and "fool," and jam, and sparkling champagne, as in good old English homes. In moist situations raspberries also are fine and plentiful; currants usually bear less abundantly than in England; and strawberries are rarest of all; both these latter being luxuriant in foliage but with a scanty show of fruit. The Alpine strawberry seems to make itself more at home here, and bears well. The out-of-doors vines produce grapes scarcely equal to those grown in favourable situations without glass at home; but here the hothouse and greenhouse supply for so long a time a succession of the finest kinds in such beautiful luxuriance, that the vines on outer walls are but little valued.

The orchard, with its fine trees and shady grassy walks, some broad, and straight, and long, others turning off into sly quiet little nooks and corners, was a great delight to me. Shadowing a bowery path and rustic bench in one place, were fine tall trees of the beautiful English elder, rich in their noble creamy-white clusters of most fragrant blossoms, mingling with the bright yellow fringy flowers of the native wattle tree, which has a powerful

scent, like hawthorn, and tolerably well supplies the place of the graceful laburnum—where that is wanting; but here it grows nobly—large trees being gaily clad in its elegant drooping flowers, the "golden chains" of one's childhood; and not far from these, their ancient friend and contemporary in blossoming, the rich purple lilac, bearing as heavy clusters as those I have so often robbed her of in dear old England. I do not think the white variety has yet graced these our Antipodean climes, at least I have not yet seen it.

On the cool grassy banks of a little pond under the elder trees, and overshadowed also by a thicket of filbert and hazel bushes—which bear plenty of nuts in autumn—the New Zealand flax flourishes; it is a noble-looking plant of the flag-kind, with long broad leaves of prodigious toughness, and which, torn in long strips, make excellent ties for all garden purposes, such as binding grafts, tying up carnations, or making up nosegays.

The cultivated flowers here are chiefly those familiar to us in English gardens, with some brilliant natives of the Cape, and many pretty indigenous flowering shrubs interspersed. Most of these latter are so hardy that I have no doubt the greater por-

tion of those now confined, by their English cultivators, in the greenhouse or conservatory, would thrive better in the open air, provided they were placed in a sheltered spot, and guarded from the biting frosts of mid-winter—for to moderate frosts they are well accustomed here—and, being evergreens, their varied foliage would be a valuable acquisition in the autumn and early spring.

The gradual advance of the seasons is pleasantly marked, in English gardens, by the progressive succession of flowers passing before us like a beautiful procession, led in by the "Fair Maid of February" and her attendant crocuses, and followed in unfailing order by the brilliant train of spring, summer, and autumn flowers, till the last pale chrysanthemums twine in the wreath of green old Christmas himself: but here, even the gentle flowers rebel against all Old World rules and customs, and so crowd one on another in the year's pageant that we can sometimes gather spring, summer, and autumn flowers within three months, which I, loving the old way best, greatly lament. In favoured spots near the sea, where the frosts are less keen than in the more inland districts, the common red, scarlet, and large purple geraniums grow many feet high,

and flower nearly all the year round; so do the crimson and pink China roses, and the common fuchsia; whilst the double violets push up such full bright flowers from amidst their clustering leaves, that, but for the exquisite perfume which vouches for their dear identity, one might fancy that a blue ranunculus had been invented.

Latterly, a few lovers of good flowers have introduced some of the better and newer kinds of geraniums, pansies, picotees, fuchsias, and other "florists' flowers," greatly to the enrichment of our Tasmanian collections, and every new arrival flourishes most satisfactorily in this fine climate.

A circular inclosure in the garden forms a small rabbit-warren, well stocked with the common kinds, many of which having long ago been turned loose, their abundance all over the district is now so great as sometimes to be troublesome and mischievous. The fence-banks overgrown with huge gorse-bushes form admirable retreats for the pretty little animals, and they increase so rapidly, and make such depredations among the young turnips and springing corn, that occasionally a proclamation of "war to the knife" goes forth, when a troop of sportsmen and spaniels take the field; at such times the

golden-blossomed gorse-bushes do not wholly escape, many of the most effectual "covers" being burned down in order to dislodge the rabbits.

The most interesting ornaments of Cambria belonging to the animal kingdom were, in my estimation, a pair of beautiful tame black swans, the first of these birds that I had seen in their native land. They seemed to live very happily in the creek below the house, and always came at a call to be fed with bread or corn. I cannot in conscience pronounce them to be quite equal in majestic beauty to the white swan, but certainly few of the feathered tribe can exceed them when on the water. Their plumage of glossy raven-black, with a few snow-white feathers in the wings and tail, is as elegantly grave a dress as can be conceived, and the bright coral-red bill gives a gay air to the graceful and expressive head and eyes. In the long slender neck I at first missed the curve that looks so stately in the white swan, but soon got reconciled to it. Their note is very melodious and plaintive, with a kind of harp-tone in it, sounding very sweetly as they call to each other over the water, or fly high overhead at night, when it seems like an echo of music from the clouds.

Their nests are generally made in some low bank or islet, and formed of a rude heap of water-weeds. The hen lays five or six large long dingy-white eggs, and the cygnets are at first white, being clothed only in the soft thick white down which forms the inner garment of the swan at all ages, and to obtain which cruelty of the most brutal kind has been and is still practised towards the poor swans. The general custom was, to take the birds in large quantities in the moulting season, when they are most easily captured and extremely fat; they were then confined in pens, *without any food*, to linger miserably for a time, till ready to die of starvation, because, whilst they are fat, the down can neither be so well stripped off nor so effectually prepared. Troops of people make a trade in the eggs, taking these in immense quantities from all the known haunts of the swans, so as very nearly to exterminate them; and, in proof of this, I had been above two years at *Swan* Port before, in any of my numerous rides or drives, my desire to see a *wild* black swan was gratified, though, formerly, thousands frequented every lagoon. Even the tame pets at Cambria were not suffered to live in peace; during our stay there, "Jackey" was one day miss-

ing, and found shot dead, lying some short distance down the creek; poor Matey shared the same fate some time after, and lingered several days, after part of her bill had been shot away.

I shall not be deemed to have given a satisfactory sketch of my sable favourites, unless I add the result of my experience touching their quality when eaten. A fine fat swan is by no means a contemptible dish on the dinner-table, as the worthies who shot at our tame favourites doubtless knew; dressed goose-fashion, they are thought to taste like that bird, but I consider them superior, being less coarsely fat, and of a more game-like flavour, especially if served without the customary strong "illustrations" of sage and onion bestowed upon goose.

My second Australian Christmas Day was passed at Cambria, and found me just as involuntarily sceptical of the time, as I had felt the year before in Sydney. To receive the good old-fashioned wishes of "A merry Christmas and a happy New Year," accompanied by bouquets of summer-flowers, from girls in white muslin frocks! and to hear such murmured sounds in pantry and larder as "Christmas Beef," "Christmas Turkeys," and "Mince-pies," on a glorious Italian-skied, radiant, sunny, *hot*

midsummer day! That the anomaly was believed in here, was, however, quite evident; for, before I was up that morning, busy hands had been at work dressing the house all over. Holly there was none; but the picture-frames and chimneys and sideboard were gaily and gracefully adorned with lovely native shrubs, and a wreathy crown or garland suspended from the drawing-room ceiling; whilst plentiful bouquets of garden-flowers made the house bright and fragrant; and a large family dinner party, music and dancing, and abundant mirth, all helped to do honour to the world-beloved day; so that, although not the real, proper, genuine *original* Christmas to me, it was a very bright and pleasant parody upon it.

Pic-nic parties were very popular with our summer circle at Cambria, and several pretty spots were successively selected as the scenes of our rural banquets. The calm, bright, settled summer weather of this delightful island is far better adapted for such expeditions than the fickle climate of England, whose wayward skies, like spoiled children, can never be found in the right humour, but will persist in weeping most vehemently when we expect them to smile their brightest. Here a fine morning might

generally be depended upon as heralding a fine day; indeed, weeks and months of fair weather succeeded each other, until the farmers grew most impatient for rain on their parching lands, and I found that my admiration of this particular summer *as* a summer, was by no means echoed by those interested in the growth of crops, for it was unusually dry, insomuch that I began to see visions of New South Wales in the dusty road and yellow fields, that, when I first came, lay like emeralds in the spring sunshine.

Our progresses to the appointed spots for our sylvan banquets were performed in divers manners, and the marshalling forth of the cavalcade often made as motley and busy a scene as the "Going to the Chase" or "Return from Hawking" of many a fine old picture, though made up of matters less essentially picturesque in themselves. One sketch will suffice; the first object on the canvas being a capacious open cart, drawn slowly into the courtyard by four fine oxen, the bed of the cart filled with fresh straw. And now the bustle of preparation, which had hitherto been confined to kitchen, pantry, and cellar, began to manifest itself outside, as baskets and boxes packed with clean straw or

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white cloths were busily carried forth; their envelopes not wholly concealing protruding rims of plates, corks of bottles, or the handle of a saucepan—for potatoes boiled out of doors are well known to possess an unusually fine flavour, at least they are always most relished; and the presence of a gridiron or frying-pan is also essential, giving in its use a kind of earnest reality to the preparations, which the unfolding ready-prepared viands seems to some deficient in. The baskets and boxes, safely stowed, were followed by a heterogeneous collection of parasols, cushions, shawls, and cloaks, and lastly by some of the juvenile members of the party, deeply shadowed in curtained poke-bonnets, who being all comfortably packed, and little misunderstandings between opposite parasols finally adjusted, the bullock-driver thrashed the air violently with his long ponderous whip, and the quiet docile team moved slowly off. After a due time had been allowed for these heavy troops to proceed in advance, the next division of the army prepared to march, and the jaunting-car and phaeton drove up to receive their living freight, who were usually accompanied by some of the party on horseback; and lastly, bringing up the rear, came our own

roomy nondescript before mentioned—and as our noble steed added to his more valuable qualities a habit of rearing and plunging the moment one's foot touched the step, my cleverness was tasked to the utmost to get safely on board and make a desperate snatch at the baby, held up at arm's length; which perilous feat accomplished, and the nursemaid packed in the excrescence behind, away we dashed after the rest.

A bold rocky point on the west side of the bay, one of the many we had traversed on our last day's journey, was our destination on one occasion; the cliffs were full of strange fantastic caves and hollows, where the sea chafed and roared very grandly, and sent jets of foam flying high through the narrow clefts, beneath which it surged and swelled. Some of the upper and drier caves were strewn thickly over with innumerable kinds of sponges, blown in from the sea; some, great masses one or two feet thick—others, delicate little web-work on the stems of kelp and corallines; some branching into five or six finger-shaped portions, like a hand with swollen joints. One smooth close kind I often found, exactly the shape of a French roll; others were like pears or strings of sausages. And the various colours

and texture of these strange zoophytic creations seemed infinite: many of them were so coarse as to seem like quantities of bristles stuck together in a rough irregular net-work, and from these were gradations to those so fine that they required a microscope to detect any fibres in them. These last had almost always smooth tubular openings passing through them from end to end.

By the time I had made a collection of "particularly curious" specimens, enough to fill a small boat had I carried them away, we were summoned to assist at the banquet "al fresco," beneath some trees at a little distance from my interesting sponge-museums among the caves and cliffs, to which, after our repast, I and my scramble-loving better-half returned, and continued our explorations till the time for our re-embarkation and departure arrived.

One of our expeditions was to the mouth of Swan Port, our way lying along the broad smooth beach at the head of Oyster Bay, which extends for nine miles in an unbroken sweep, and is so pleasant to ride upon that only one vehicle, the roomy jaunting-car, was required to carry some of the juveniles, the provisions, my maid, and the baby; most of the party preferring to ride on horseback. After our

merry canter along the fine sands, we dispersed about the beach, gathering shrubs or picking up shells: among the former were some very handsome bushes, some—a species of *Leucopogon*—bearing a very small white berry, and others a pink and white fruit called native currants, not remarkable for fine flavour, but very ornamental and pretty; and many of the shells at this end of the beach were larger or altogether different from those nearer home. The view up the winding estuary of Swan Port, with its low islands and the dark wooded hills rising behind, made a pleasant picture, and the ever-beautiful Schoutens rose grandly before us.

These days always passed so rapidly that it was generally nearly dark when we arrived at home, and the evenings closed with music, dancing, and pleasant saunters in the veranda, where the bright moonlight put to shame the artificial gleam from the open windows, and showed my favourite view of the bay and Schoutens almost as clearly as by day.

The almost daring feeling of security, as it at first seemed to me, which is general here, would assuredly astonish any one who should witness it whilst remembering the fearful stories they tell now in England of our awful condition, social degrada-

tion, and so forth. What family in England would think of living in a large lone country-house, with French windows to the lower rooms unsecured by a single bar, shutter, or bell, if their own and their neighbours' servants, and, with rare exceptions, all the rural population around them, were, or had recently been, prisoners convicted of all varieties of crime? No one in his senses would dream of such "rash absurdity," as it would be considered, and perhaps correctly; each house would be a garrison, and its indwellers captives to their own terrors. Yet such is the common custom here, in this "den of thieves," this "gaol of the empire;" and the rarity here of burglary or robbery of any description, as compared with their constant occurrence at Home, proves the smallness of the risk.

CHAPTER VII.

Bush Fires.—Their Use.—Diamond Bird.—Robin.—Blue-Cap.—Cormorant.—Gulls.—Islands in Bass's Straits.—Pied and Black Red-Bills.—Blue Crane.

DURING the hot dry weather of the Christmas time, very extensive bush fires spread about the country, and were sometimes extremely mischievous in their destruction of fences, which are very liable to be thus burned, unless care be taken, previously to the dry season, to clear away all fallen wood and rubbish, and to burn the high grass and ferns for a breadth of three or four yards on either side. The fences of sheep-runs, which extend in lines of many miles in length, over the uncleared hills and forests, are those which most frequently suffer; but growing crops, stacks, farm-buildings, and dwellings are likewise sometimes swept away by the rapidly-advancing fire.

By day, the effect of these great conflagrations

was far from pleasant, causing an increase of heat in the air, and a thick haze over the landscape generally; whilst from the various points where the fires were raging, huge columns and clouds of dense smoke were seen rising, as if from volcanoes: but at night, the scene was often very grand; sometimes the fire might be watched, on any rising ground, spreading onwards and upwards, swifter and brighter as it continually gained strength, till the whole mountain side was blazing together; and after the first fierce general flame had passed away, and the great trunks of trees alone remained burning, the effect resembled that of the scattered lights seen on approaching a distant city at night. The rocky Schoutens glittered with partial lines and trains of fire, that marked their rugged and lofty outline like burnished gold amidst the darkness. Each night showed some new change in the great illumination, until a heavy fall of rain extinguished it altogether, much to the satisfaction of all who feared its nearer approach.

A recent scientific writer (the Count Strzelecki), in treating of this colony, condemns the practice of burning, as seriously injurious to the pasturage, and seems to suppose that the custom originated with

the colonists; whereas the aborigines practised it constantly, knowing the advantages of destroying the dense growth of shrubs and coarse plants which cover the country in many parts, and spring up again after the fire with young and fresh shoots, which many of the wild animals then gladly feed on. The grass also grows again immediately after the fires, and is greatly preferred by all animals to the old growth; whilst, from the destruction of tall ferns and scrub, it is rendered more accessible to them. Sheep-owners know how serviceable occasional bush fires are, and generally arrange to burn portions of their sheep-runs at different times, so as to have a new growth about every three years. Where this is neglected for a length of time, the rank luxuriance of the great brake fern and other uneatable plants, and the accumulated masses of dead wood, bark, and leaves, form such a body of fuel, that when a fire does reach it, the conflagration is thrice as mischievous in the destruction of fences as it otherwise would have been.

Although every one else perpetually complained of the heat during this glorious summer, to me it was perfectly delightful, so lasting an impression had the scorching weather of New South Wales

left behind it. Sea-bathing was a great luxury, too, and a snug bath, built near the house, over a nook of the salt-water creek, sufficiently deep to afford a good plunge, enabled me to enjoy and benefit from its invigorating effects without tasking my indolence by taking a morning walk to the more distant sea-beach.

In the trees and bushes near the creek, I frequently made new acquaintances of the bird kind, but only know a few of them by name. Among these was that tiny flitting fairy called the Diamond bird: it truly is a dainty little jewel; all gold and shaded amber, with silver spots. Not less beautiful, and far more common, was my old darling the robin, as exquisite a beau as ever, with his back of blackest black, and his breast a living flame of scarlet; a warm brave little heart there beats within it too, or his sparkling eye tells no true story! With him came another of Nature's marvels of beauty and brightness, dressed also partly in black, black *bird-velvet*, off the same piece as robin's coat, but with a cap and mantle of blue:—such blue! The deepest summer sky is mere dull gray to it! This wondrous little bird is called the "superb warbler" (*Malurus superbus*),

and superb in truth he is. So bright, so swift, so merry, so musical as these little beings are, sure nothing else ever was! The bluecap has a domestic contrast, too, in his quiet-coloured little wife, who, like her Old-World namesake, Jenny Wren,

> "Will still put on her brown gown,
> And never go too fine."

But though not dressed in as gay hues, she is as merry and sprightly as her mate; a perfect little "dot" of a bird, (I wish Dickens could see her!) quite round, like a ball set on two fine black pins, with a sweet little head at one side, and at the other, or more truly on the top, the drollest little long straight upright tail that ever was seen. The robin and Mr. Bluecap and Jenny, are all much alike in shape, and the way in which their indescribably funny little tails are cocked up over their backs, sometimes almost touching their heads, as they hop and pop about, up and down, and in and out, cannot be imagined—it must be seen. Mr. Meredith says they seem to him to spend their whole lives in trying to prove an "*alibi*," convincing you they are in one place, yet showing themselves in another at the same instant; whilst I, in attempting to follow with my eyes their almost

invisible transits from spray to paling, and from the paling on to the rose-bush, and then back again to the cherry tree, always feel as if I were witnessing some exhibition of legerdemain or conjuring, and am prepared for surprises and mystifications without limit.

"Extremes meet," it is often said; but never can the axiom be more perfectly illustrated than when a great, heavy, ugly, stupid, gross-looking monster of a cormorant comes sousing down amongst a party of these dainty little fairy birds, as I have sometimes seen one, when attracted by the shoals of fish glancing in the bright pebbly shallows of the creek. Settling himself, after much preliminary bobbing and flapping, on a stout limb of a dead gum-tree, he sits like a wooden effigy of a bird, watching his prey.

Very different are many other of the sea birds that sometimes visit the creek, but are more commonly seen on the beach and rocks. All the gulls are beautiful, whether pied, gray, or white, the latter especially; they are *so* white, and skim over the blue sea in the distant sunlight like snow-flakes, only transformed to bright-eyed birds as they near the shore; when their sweet mellow

cry comes floating with them, soft as the tone of a far-away bell.

Although gulls are not generally very tempting as articles of food, I have heard Mr. Meredith recount his great delight at having once, some years ago, killed nine at one shot, when he had been shipwrecked on an island in Bass's Straits, and had lived for some days on a miserable sort of porridge or burgoo, made of flour recovered from the wreck, and so damaged by salt water that it would not bake, mixed with water so strongly impregnated with alum that it could scarcely be drunk. After this diet, meat, even though that of a sea-bird, became valuable, and the nine gulls were a most precious acquisition; but, being shot at dusk, they were put aside until dawn, to be prepared for breakfast; and then, woful to relate, all that remained of them were two legs, the rest having been devoured during the night by rats. A species of native rat abounds on many of these islands, and snakes are numerous on all, however widely separated by the boisterous sea and strong currents that flow between them. Mr. Meredith was told by an old "Straitsman," who had for years been wandering all about them, hunting seals and mutton birds, that he never

was on one, though only containing a few acres, on which he did not observe snakes; and my husband gives the same account, so far as his knowledge of them extends. On one occasion, during the sojourn on "Prime Seal Island" before mentioned, he had observed a fine "Cape Barren goose"* alight, and, taking his gun, was stealing warily towards it, keeping a rock between himself and the goose, when a rustling amongst the scrub caused him to look down, and he saw part of an enormous snake, which was rapidly moving across, close beneath his feet; fortunately, the loss of the goose, which he alarmed by his precipitate retreat from the snake, was the only harm done.

Among the sea-birds, the "red-bills" are great favourites of ours; they are so very sprightly and handsome in their clear brilliant black and white plumage, gaily set off by their bills and legs of the brightest coral. They run along the sands with exceeding swiftness, always running into the water to take wing, when alarmed by the approach of such terrific things as ourselves. They scarcely make

* The "Cape Barren Goose" frequents the island from which it takes its name, and others in the Straits. It is about the same size as a common goose, the plumage a handsome mottled brown and gray, somewhat owl-like in character.

anything fit to be called a nest, but lay about two eggs on the beach or sandbank, and the young ones, until able to escape danger by flight, lie close and motionless, and thus often evade detection; but if by chance any one approaches the defenceless little ones, the old birds are extremely bold and indefatigable in their endeavours to divert his attention; flying or running close round him, and then circling away a short distance to entice pursuit; sometimes they flutter lamely along, as if hurt and incapable of flight, until they have succeeded in removing the threatened peril from the precious little babes in the sand, when, with a backward glance and a saucy cry of triumph, away they fly, as sound and swift as ever.

Besides the pied red-bills, there are some rather larger, whose plumage is wholly black; but these, although handsome, are less so than the others. Both species are sometimes eaten, but I rejoice to say their flavour is too "fishy" to be generally liked; for I love them so well whilst alive, that I grieve to have them destroyed. The wide extent of the sea beaches here requires the presence of all the birds that belong to, or are wont to visit them, to add their small items of joyous animal life to the

great and grand attributes of ocean, and to people with their busy activity the otherwise lonely strand.

The figures of my favourite red-bills, under the name of "oyster-catchers," in Gould's "Birds of Australia," are less faithful than most of his admirable plates; they are too heavy-looking, and represent the bills and feet as orange-coloured, instead of their real hue of pure brilliant coral-red.

A beautiful blue crane often came and sat in a bare tree over the creek, watching the fish: I had amused myself for some mornings in watching him with equal attention, and admiring his long elegant neck, slender legs, large bright eyes, and lovely delicate silvery-blue plumage, and I vainly hoped that we might still go on quietly together; but, alas! despite my extreme discretion in not attracting attention to my feathered companion, he was one morning seen, doomed, shot without mercy, and a day or two after appeared as a second-course roast, which was much praised. I did not taste my unlucky friend; I should, however, imagine, from what I had observed of his way of living, that the *post mortem* examination would reveal to the palates of those who did, rather strong evidence of his ichthyological researches.

CHAPTER VIII.

Excursion to the Schoutens.—Scenery.—Kelp Forests.—Fishing.—White Beach.—Rivulet.—Gully.—Lace Lichen.—Ferns.—Echoes.—View.—Dinner on the Beach.—Return.

I OFTEN call to mind with great pleasure one excursion in particular, which we made (during our sojourn at Cambria) to the Schoutens. It was in April, when the pleasant autumn weather was growing cool, and frequent frosty mornings denoted the approach of the mild winter of this delightful climate, that our expedition was planned, and as the days were "drawing in," as old ladies say, it was advisable to make the utmost use of the daylight. Accordingly, we rose and breakfasted before sunrise, and the crisp grass, silvered over with hoar-frost, crunched under the horses' feet as we drove off; our small party being arranged in the roomy jaunting-car, drawn by a pair of horses driven tandem-wise. A box and basket, well stored with materials

for luncheon, accompanied us, and also a servant to take care of the horses. Away we went, first through grass and turnip fields, and then bumping over the tussocks on the sandbank, until we made a descent on the glorious beach, where, on the broad hard sands, our gallant steeds might put forth their energies without a chorus of cries, deprecating the bone-breaking jolts of an uneven road; and the fine "nine-mile beach" was merrily and quickly traversed.

The grand view before us, of the Schouten range, grew more and more distinct and beautiful as we advanced, and the sun rose higher. The mountainous chain or group of the Schoutens is most picturesquely composed; the mainland portion commences, next the mouth of Swan Port, in three chief eminences, running nearly parallel east and west; these are connected by a narrow isthmus of low land running from their western side, with another group of sublime bare granitic peaks, trending to the south, and between which and the triple mount, the bright blue waves of the Pacific flow into "Wineglass Bay" ("Thouin's Bay" of the published maps). A strait, called the "Schouten Passage," separates these kindred crags from the

Schouten Island, which stretches away still farther south, its swelling heights and almost inaccessible rocky ranges crowned by a lofty dome-shaped mount, and its southern extremity ending in an abrupt precipitous bluff.

Beyond all these, we saw Maria Island, rising high and shadowy in the morning light, and the "White Rock" ("Isle des Phoques") gleaming like the sail of a ship, as it caught the first sunbeams on its steep fort-like sides.

Behind us, the lower view had dwindled almost to insignificance; Swansea and the neighbouring little bays and points being almost lost; but above them were now seen ranges of the lofty mountain-tiers in the interior, clothed in the usual sombre hues of the forest, with the morning vapours still hanging round them in gauzy mists, or rolling upward, brightened by the early sunbeams.

On arriving at the mouth of Swan Port, we found a boat awaiting us, and quickly deserted our jaunting-car, leaving the groom to take care of the horses, whose comfort had also been cared for, and a good feed of corn carried with us for them to discuss in our absence. The cloaks and boxes being transferred to our new conveyance, we em-

barked to cross over to the "Old Fishery Bay," where one of Mr. G. Meredith's whaling stations was formerly situated. The view up Swan Port was now added to the grand mountain landscape I have attempted to sketch, and most entirely I enjoyed the new and beautiful scene.

The sea here was so perfectly translucent, and the white granite sand at the bottom so bright, that on looking down, a whole world of strange and exquisite things were clearly visible. We gazed upon forests of broad-leaved trees of sea-weed, their strong roots clasping the rocks some fathoms below, and their thick round stems ascending through the clear water to within a foot or two of the surface, spreading forth their broad, long, gracefully-curved, slowly-waving leaves in perpetual undulations, as if each were instinct with individual life, and all blended together in a grave and gentle dance. Among the leaves of these marine forests glided bright, silver-glancing, filmy-finned fish, and when we sailed past these, and came over portions of the sand where no kelp grew, we saw gigantic sea-stars, spreading their long arms out, purple and red; and shells, and more fish, glancing and darting to and fro so temptingly that our party proposed

catching some; and in a moment three or four hooks and lines were over the side, the boatmen being well provided with such sea-stores. Before I had watched one of them sink near the bottom, two or three others were pulled up, with fine fish, of a kind called here "Flat-heads," a name tolerably descriptive of their form. The head is broad and flat, the eyes prominent, and placed on the top; the body narrows from thence to the tail, and is armed with several strong sharp spines. So eagerly did these poor flat-heads take the bait, that a dozen might be seen hurrying to each hook as it was lowered, and all the fishers had to do was, to drop their lines and pull them up again. About ten minutes thus employed served to furnish such an abundant supply, that it was decided we should not bestow any more time on the sport, and we proceeded on our way.

The huge granite-cragged peaks seemed to rise higher and higher as we neared them, and soon entering a lovely little bay, sheltered on all sides save the opening by wooded crags and glittering granite rocks, the boat's keel grated along the snow-white gravelly beach, and we landed at the "Old Fishery." The beach was dazzlingly white. I sat

down on it, and, gathering up a handful of the shining gravel, found that it is pure white quartz, apparently the remaining portion of decomposed granite, the mica and felspar being washed away, and the disintegrated quartz thrown up on the smooth beach, like sand. The effect was most beautiful, and to me, strange; and the clear blue water rippling in gentle waves, and singing its soft murmuring music amongst the tiny pebbles, was so pleasant to eye and ear, that I had half forgotten the long scramble we had planned, when, all preliminary arrangements being made, I was aroused from my sea-dreams.

An old hut, the remains of a bread-oven, and other tokens of former habitants, would have given an air of desolation, as I think deserted human dwellings always do, to any place less beautiful; but all of nature was so bright and joyous, that I had not a shadow of the sentimental, even for the cold hearth of the crazy old hut. Numbers of whales' bones lay all around, both on the white beach—they rivalling it in whiteness—and among the grass and low shrubs above. A rivulet of pure fresh water gurgled down from the mountain at the back of the station, and its little still pools lay cool

and tempting, shaded over with acacias and other lovely shrubs. We walked for awhile beside the rivulet, crossing it from time to time to gain the best path. Numbers of flowers were still in blossom, the bright crimson *Epacris* being the most conspicuous, and my hands were soon full of them.

We now began to climb a rather steep ascent, our purpose being to mount up between the western and middle peaks of the Triad, and, from the top of the gully, look over into Wineglass Bay and the Pacific Ocean; so on we went, with high resolves for the execution of the project. The gully varied considerably in width, and often in the narrowest places we found huge blocks of granite had tumbled pell-mell into the gorge, some being as large as a house, and from that size downwards; and when the sides of the ravine were perpendicular cliffs, it became a matter of some puzzle, considerable difficulty, and still more amusement, to surmount the barrier. Sometimes I could crawl beneath the rocks, if they happened to tilt conveniently up at one side, and then what stores of exquisite mosses and lichens, and dainty delicate ferns, I detected in their dim and cool bowers! Once or twice (whether so inspired by the genius of the place that I began

to fancy myself something less material than I really am, I know not), in squeezing between two rocks that just left a tempting crevice, and so offered a chance of escaping a scramble over their tops, I became firmly jammed, and had begun to speculate on the pleasant prospect of starvation and death, and the matter for contemplation which my bones would furnish to some future discoverer, when by timely assistance, or the summing up of my whole remaining strength in one last struggle, I was extricated, and went toiling on. The first few hundred yards so completely tired me that I felt as if I must give up the idea of reaching the top of the gully, and sat down, weary, breathless, and dispirited, on a log; but after resting for a few minutes, I seemed to gain new strength, and went on resolutely, clambering over rocks, logs, bushes, and briars, diving under huge boulders of granite all damp and mossy, and often shrinking in terror lest my foot should disturb some horrible venomous snake hidden amidst the thick beds of mingled living and decayed vegetation that filled up the lesser gullies and hollows.

I found that most singular and beautiful lichen, the *Cenomyce retispora*, spreading in large white

masses over the red granite rocks, adorning the rough coarse stone with its elegant garb of fine and delicate lace. It is white and thin, and perforated all over with small regular apertures, like plain Valenciennes lace, gathered and plaited and puckered up in all conceivable diversity of turns and twists, so as to form a pretty close mass, like an assemblage of baby's cap-borders all pressed together, and growing about as high from the rock as the width of those same little trimmings. There is a kind of coral found on the Tasmanian beaches so like this lichen, that I must suppose the sea-nymphs and fairies have modelled them both in some trial of skill; but I am quite unable to decide which party must have been deemed victorious, both specimens of Nature's fancy-work are so exquisitely wrought.

The ferns, too—the green and graceful ferns—how beautiful they were! Besides the common brake, and a kind of hart's-tongue, very similar to those of England, I gathered one or two kinds of maiden-hair, one like the *Adiantum capillus Veneris*, but much larger than the English species, the stem taller, and the pinnules larger, but their slender hair-like foot-stalks as delicate as my fragile little favourite at home. Other ferns had

broad fronds like the hart's-tongue of England, with similar fructification, and one species was quite new to me, nor can I find any botanical description answering to it in Loudon's "Encyclopædia of Plants," that invaluable and rarely-failing lexicon. The stem of my new fern is thin, smooth, and erect, from ten to fifteen inches high, with two forked stalks branching off from its top. The pinnæ which proceed from them on each side are long, very narrow, and of a very dark green. The sori extend in two rows of small round spots down the under side of the pinnules; and the upper side, which is only the width of the impression raised by the sori, has the appearance of being formed of two rows of very small green beads, which diminish to points at the narrow end. This is but a clumsy portrait, yet I cannot sketch it better in words; and although I gathered many specimens, they withered and dried up before I reached home, my tin box not forming a part of our preparations.

The perfect distinctness of the echoes here was a source of much amusement to us; our names, called loudly, seemed to be taken up by choruses of airy voices shouting back the words. I never before heard my Christian name arranged with so

many variations. A hearty laugh roused a most unearthly supernatural peal of repetitions; each mossy stone of the cliffs and peaks above us appeared to give out its own independent voice, and then they all echoed each other, till the very air seemed vibrating with mirth; and then, after we had again and again repeated our laughing chorus, I suggested how grand it would be to have a cannon fired in this enchanted glen!—and Mr. Meredith tried his fowling-piece as the best substitute at hand. The report was taken up and prolonged into a peal of thunder, and when the loud near echoes ceased, the far-off crags and caves rolled forth upon the air continued reverberations, sometimes pausing for a moment, and then swelling out again, as though the mountain *genii* were too deeply outraged by our presumption to forget or forgive it; and as each told the angry tale, others carried it away to repeat it again and again.

Our rough scramble up this wild gully was amply rewarded when we reached the top, and, resting on a fantastic perch of rocks and roots of trees, I had time to look calmly about me and enjoy the splendid view.

On either side of the ravine rose the towering summits of the mountain, bare masses of granite heaped up on high like giant altars, or rising abruptly from belts of shrubs and trees, like ancient fortress walls and turrets. But the downward and onward view was like enchantment! Far below my giddy perch (from which to the sea-level the steep craggy side of the mountain was fringed with a various growth of forest trees and shrubs) lay, calmly slumbering in the bright sunshine, that blue and beautiful nook of the Pacific named Wineglass Bay. We could see the silvery circles of the tide break on the white beach, but only a most attentive ear could at that height detect the low whispering sound they made. Beyond the beach, a green grassy slope ran back to the foot of the mountains, which rose majestically to an altitude of many hundred feet, their lower and less steep portions clothed with forests, and their bare lofty conical peaks pointing to the clouds; countless points and promontories stretched out into the bay, some crowned with fantastic rocks that looked like forts and castles; these continued one beyond another, into the clear blue distance, where one little island stood alone, as if to mark

the union of the fairy bay with the broad, bright, blue Pacific.

I could scarcely draw at all for looking at the glorious scene, and the few minutes that could be allowed for my attempt were gone all too soon, and we began our downward progress, wherein the stumbling and scrambling of the ascent were repeated with liberal interest; and heated, tired, and thirsty, we again looked lovingly into the rivulet's shady pools, and scooped up the water to drink.

On reaching the beach where we had landed, we found that the boatmen had made for us a nice dining-pavilion in a shady nook, among some myrtle and honeysuckle trees, the boat-sail being cleverly converted into a tent, open at one side, and the cloth laid on the grass beneath, whilst joints of whale's vertebræ, white and smooth and clean, were placed round for seats;—what could be more appropriate at the "Old Fishery?"—and our chickens and ham, rabbit-pie, tarts, fruit, cider, and wine, rendered doubly good by our well-earned appetites, received the ample justice they deserved.

After our pleasant repast, I wandered round the nearest point to another beach, seeking shells, but

found very few, the pebbly gravel apparently grinding them in pieces as they are thrown up.

The day was fast closing when we sailed back to the mouth of Swan Port, and very soon after the jaunting-car had again taken in its passengers, the sun set, but the horses cantered gaily along; the "song-voiced" of our little party occasionally "rousing the night-owl with a catch," as we rolled over the smooth hard sands. We were compelled to walk over the sandbank for safety, it being impossible for the driver to avoid the holes and great tussocks at night; and so dark was it, that I had some difficulty in groping my way after my more active companions. The lights gleaming from the windows at home proved a welcome beacon to the weary party, and our pleasant day's wandering closed without the most trivial drawback to our enjoyment; indeed, for a long time I marked the day of our Schouten expedition as the whitest day in my calendar since leaving England; and my good husband, to whom the glorious mountains have been familiar from boyhood, made a charming plan for taking us the next summer in a boat, with proper appliances and means for a sojourn, such as a tent, mattress, blankets, kettle, tin plates and pannicans,

tea, sugar, bread, and shooting, fishing, and sketching tackle, and so go coasting round about the picturesque Schoutens, landing wherever fancy led us, and leading a week or two of gipsy-life; but I am sorry to say this pleasant castle in the air never advanced beyond the ground plan, although for several succeeding summers we promised ourselves that the *next* should certainly see our project realized.

CHAPTER IX.

Swan Port Conchology.—Peculiarly-formed Arca.—Banks of Oyster-Shells.—Living Oysters.—Sea-Hares.—Land Shells.—Mutton Fish.—Beauty-Snails.—A Volute.—Corallines.—Star-Fish.—Sponges.

THE fine broad sandy beach near Cambria was a constant source of delight to me, for although our wanderings had led us over the sea and near the sea perpetually, yet I had not until now enjoyed a sea-side ramble for years, and many a long morning I idled pleasantly away in sauntering on the "Long Beach," which stretches from the Meredith River to the mouth of Swan Port: this was my favourite haunt, and a most deceptive one too, for often when I thought we had only rambled a very moderate distance, and turned to retrace our steps, it seemed as if those smooth tantalizing sands were interminable; and the few landmarks telling us the whereabouts of our goal, the "creek," beside which lay our path from the beach to the house, appeared to recede as we approached them. The grand range

of the Schoutens, the distant Maria Island, and the little fort-like promontory of Swansea in the foreground, often enlivened by the arrival or departure of small coasting vessels in the beautiful bay, made a picture that no one could very quickly weary of, and to me it was always charming, and always wearing some new phase of beauty.

Many of the shells we found were familiar to me, my kind relatives here having years ago supplied my cabinet at home with specimens of the greater portion; but the pleasure of picking them up myself in this nook of the world which I had formerly so little dreamed of visiting in person, was by no means a contemptible gratification, and as one day after another brought some new representative of my old treasures before me, I became tenfold more interested in the quest. I found that both live and dead shells of some two or three kinds would be thrown up in considerable numbers for some days, or even weeks, and then perhaps months would elapse without the same species being seen at all, or but very rarely; but by this nice distribution we had always some kinds in season.

As the collections of shells I made at Swan Port contained a tolerable variety, perhaps an enumera-

tion of them may be interesting, although my knowledge of conchology is too limited to enable me to determine often more than the genera.

Serpula, one species, very commonly found in small masses of multitudes of little intertwisted white-ribbed tubes, but not containing the living worms.

Spirorbis, on leaves of algæ.

Pholas papyracea, and, I believe, *P. dactylus*, but only dead shells.

Solen ensis, fresh and perfect shells, not alive.

Panopœa, *Glycimeris*, dead shells.

Anatina rostrata; *Tellina radiata*; *Tellinides*.

Donax, a small species.

Astarte Danmoniensis, and others; one species of Astarte being a large white, heavy, orbicular shell, with the ridges fine as hair, smooth and close.

Cyprina, *Cytherea*, and *Venus*, many species; one of the latter very beautiful, from one to two inches broad, and with four or five broad up-turned projecting ridges, fringed beneath like the fur of a mushroom, and lengthening posteriorly into curved spines, from a quarter to three quarters of an inch in length. These were the most beautiful bivalve shells I found, and they were very rare; their colour

was usually white, with the fringe-linings of the ridges a delicate blush pink. I used to compare them to a lady's "drawn" silk bonnet, but we very seldom indeed found them perfect, the long spines and fragile edges of the shell being generally worn and eroded even whilst living.

At one time patches of the sand were nearly covered with quantities of the fine milk-white *Cardium*, which I used to prize so much in my collection, that I was almost involuntarily careful so to tread as not to crush the gracefully heart-shaped shells.

In this same collection I had also many single valves of a small *Arca* of peculiar form, one end being rounded, and the other elongated to a point (something like *Pandora rostrata*), the hinge consisting of numerous fine teeth. We constantly found single valves on the beach, but sought in vain for a live or entire shell, until one day, whilst idly picking to pieces a lump of zoophytic sea-stuff that had been washed up amidst kelp and sponges, I found some of the oft-sought little shells imbedded in it alive; but only a few rewarded my subsequent searches for them, although I pursued the quest most industriously.

I sometimes have found old water-worn valves of a larger Arca (*Bysso-arca Noæ*, I think), and valves of a *Pectunculus* occur in like manner.

A large chestnut-brown *Modiola*, of a peculiar form, and from three to four inches long, was among our most prized shells, not being often found entire. I think it is nearly the same shell as the largest of those figured as Date Muscles, from Brazil, in Murray's "Encyclopædia of Geography."

Multitudinous colonies of the small dark blue muscle covered the rocks left exposed at low water, and clusters of a larger common kind were continually washed up.

Quantities of a small, transparent, and most fragile species of *Avicula* were repeatedly strewn over the sands; these were most delicate pellucid little shells, like the thinnest glass, or *crisp* gold-beater's skin, tinged with nicely-pencilled shades of green, brown, olive, and red; but I never found one with a fish in it, and delicate indeed must be the denizens of such dainty domiciles; pill-boxes fitted up with cotton, wool, and cambric paper, were all too coarse to preserve them.

A few small live *Pectens* (the common scallop shell), with the upper valve flat, and the lower one

concave, most beautifully and variously marked with fine colours, were the chief objects of our search for a week or two, and then came such shoals of them, both large and small, that a whole nation of scallops must have been suddenly up-turned on the beach, nearly all alive; and, as a natural consequence of their abundance, they greatly diminished in value. The fish within was firm, white, and well-flavoured, when boiled, but the quantity of sand which had washed into them could not wholly be got rid of, and prevented the otherwise nice fish from being palatable.

Oysters, at Oyster Bay, may well be supposed abundant, although they are not often obtained for the table. Enormous quantities of dead shells are found, forming large banks, forty feet high, on two low isthmuses, one of which unites the two groups of the Schouten Mountains, and the other joins the northernmost of these with the mainland. Similar banks are also found at Little Swan Port. These prodigious accumulations of oyster-shells appear inexhaustible, and are very useful as lime; the coasting vessels often bring cargoes of them across to Swansea, where they are sold to the settlers at sixpence a bushel. Large oyster-beds still exist

in the bay, exactly opposite to the shell-banks, and after high winds, both live and dead shells are thrown up on the two former of the shell-banks, but not on any other beach in the vicinity. This having doubtless been the case for centuries, the aboriginal inhabitants would be accustomed to resort thither for the oysters, and very probably added to the shells thus naturally collected, by procuring the oysters also from the beds themselves, which they could easily do, having rude bark-rafts or catamarans, and being, like most savages, expert divers. They would naturally convey the oysters to the nearest shore for the purpose of eating them, and this being in both cases the adjacent shelly beach, the banks there would gain perpetual additions from their ample repasts. This process, continuing perhaps for ages, is too obvious an assisting cause to be entirely passed over, although the still-continued increase of the banks, from shells now continually thrown up, furnishes ample reason for the surprising accumulation. In dredging for oysters upon the sea-beds, the proportion of dead to live shells brought up was as ten to one, leaving the profit a very inadequate return for the labour bestowed.

The rafts used by the aborigines of this island

must be placed in the lowest class of such fabrics, even as the people themselves were the lowest of the human species. They were formed of many little bundles of gum-tree bark, tied with grass, first separately, and then bound together in the required form, thick and flat, without any attempt at the shape of a boat or canoe, and not keeping the passenger above water when used, but just serving to float him on the surface. In, or rather *on*, these, the natives sat and paddled about with long sticks, or drifted before the wind and tide; and in calm weather frequently crossed over from the mainland to Maria Island; but on such occasions they provided a little raised platform on the raft, on which they carried some lighted fuel to kindle their fire when they arrived there.

In Little Swan Port beds of living oysters now exist, and on the adjacent shore are high banks of shells, similar to those I have mentioned; but there is no surf or "wash" in the still waters of this estuary, to cast up shells, so that unless the one kind of "natives" consumed the other to such an extent as to account for the accumulation, the banks must have been up-raised from the sea.

In Prosser's River, another estuary, farther south,

are beds of live oysters, but in this instance they are unaccompanied by the usual shore banks of dead shells.

At "East Bay Neck," a low isthmus between Tasman's Peninsula and the mainland, large banks of cockle-shells occur, in the same manner as those of oysters at Swan Port, at about four or five yards above high-water mark, and are now overgrown with grass and rushes.

At "Piccaninny Point," a small rocky promontory on the east coast, immense quantities of dead cockle-shells are constantly thrown up after a gale; ship-loads might sometimes be collected, but no accumulation can take place, as they are quickly broken by the action of the waves among the rocks.

In Port Sorell, on the north coast, wide tracts of sand laid bare at low water are full of dead shells, chiefly a small species of cockle (*Venus* ——), which furnish the only kind of lime used in the district, the shells being partially cleared from the sand previously to burning them.

I am not aware if these little facts are worth recording for aught beyond the evidence they afford of considerable and geologically recent changes having occurred in many parts of the

Tasmanian coast; the shells in all the banks named being recent species, identical with the live ones near them. Now, to return to the Swan Port shells, from which I have rambled too far.

Several kinds of *Patella* were very common, one large species having rich lustre-like rays, when held in a particular light; and a very delicate *Infundibulum* I sometimes found perfect, but much more frequently broken, being exceedingly fragile and thin. An *Emarginula*, and a small species of *Fissurella*, I also found, but these rarely.

Several of those strange-looking slugs called sea hares (*Aplysia?*) were at one time thrown on the beach, and I obtained the internal shells of two; these were very thin and horny, and, when dried, shrank to half their original size, which was about an inch and a half long by an inch broad, thickened at one side. The slugs themselves were four or five inches long, nearly black, and marked somewhat like a leech, very thick and solid; but too little life remained in them, when found, to revive in the water, though I immediately carried them to a little pool in the rocks, hoping to see them perfectly recover.

The only land shells I have seen in this colony

are two species of *Achatina*, or possibly old and young specimens of the same shell; the largest about an inch and a quarter long, brown, with two bands of white; the others very similar, but much less.

Mr. Meredith one day brought me a piece of peat-like earth, from a drain that was being dug, not far from the sea, which was full of small fresh-water shells of various species. Many of them, such as *Planorbis*, *Lymnæa*, *Paludina*, and *Cyclas*, were identical with those of English brooks and pools, and with living specimens now inhabiting those of Tasmania, but so minute, that out of a little boxful of earth (a "percussion-cap" box) I could have picked some hundreds of perfect shells, and the ground whence it came was equally full for a great distance; it seemed one mass of these fragile little shells nicely packed, with the finest and smallest vegetable fibres all amongst them, holding the whole together. As fresh-water lagoons formerly occupied a large space in the immediate vicinity of this shelly peat, the only puzzle I find in the matter is the absence of all larger shells.

I have found individuals of a kind of *Sigaretus*, which I cannot identify by any description I have,

although they may very probably not be new species.

The *Haliotis* is much better known here. Dead, but very perfect shells of *H. rubra* were frequently thrown up on the beach; some, five or six inches across, and from that size, in various gradations, down to the delicate little young ones, not larger than a small bean, all splendidly irridescent within, unless injured by a marine worm, which seems particularly partial to shells of a pearly substance. It must have been one of these delicate little pearly ones which first suggested their common name of "Venus's ear," so nicely curled over, so thin and transparent; but the colonists, sad matter-of-fact people that they are! who utilitarianize everything, and attach some vulgar work-day sort of association to all of the sublime or beautiful that they approach, have bestowed on the creature of the rainbow-tinted pearly mansion, the equivocal appellation of "Mutton-fish," and this with as little reason or propriety as they have shown in most other instances of the kind, for the animal of the *Haliotis* is scarcely eatable under any circumstances; at least it possesses about as much claim to be ranked among things cookable or edible

as did the old boots which we are told some of our gallant explorers have been fain to attack in the extremity of their Polar starvation. Such was the quality of one I tried to taste, that, whilst a leather glove or a piece of India rubber remains to me, *I* will not ask for a mutton fish! They are found alive on the rocks in from one to five fathoms water, and adhere so strongly that it requires some dexterity, and a very strong knife, inserted in a peculiar manner, to detach the fish from the rock.

A handsome *Trochus*, of a light-brown colour, and slightly rough with many small tubercles, was occasionally found; and various species of *Turbo* abounded. Some of these, rejoicing in the ancient name of Periwinkles, were, when boiled, pronounced very nice by some of our party; but they looked too green and caterpillarish, and had too strong a fishy sea-weedy sort of flavour, to find favour with my palate.

The lovely *Phasianellæ*, or Beauty-Snails, abounded on these beaches, and by the infinitely varying patterns of their markings and colours almost baffled my endeavours to find two alike. Some were white, spirally circled round by delicate but well-defined bands, ribands rather, of pale red,

diminishing to microscopic smallness of touch as they reached the apex of the shell: but the more general colours were all kinds of brown, red, and olive, blended together in beautiful patterns, some being, it would seem, a careful imitation of Scotch plaids and ginghams, so accurately and regularly is the design painted by the poor little short-lived architect; the same pattern being continued and repeated in the same shell, from the apex to the mouth, gradually expanding in size. I am not acquainted with any other shell which displays such great diversity of markings as this. The outer lip is so thin, that even in live shells it is scarcely ever found quite perfect. Their size varies from one to two and a half inches in length, the largest being by far the most rare.

A shell, similar in form to the *Phasianella*, but rather more slender, and never occurring so large as the former, is still unknown to me by name. The exterior is smooth, usually brown, and highly polished, with fine wavy or diagonal lines of white; but within, it is grooved, pearly, and highly iridescent; more richly tinged with the exquisite blue and green of the prismatic colours, than any other shell I am acquainted with. Possibly it

is a *Turbo;* but it seems almost too long and slender to belong to that round, portly, corpulent family.

A large *Fasciolaria,* a *Fusus, Triton cutaceus,* and a common kind of *Murex,* we also found, and two species of *Cassis:* one somewhat similar to *C. erinaceus,* but more inflated, and the recurving outer lip marbled with touches of deep brown on the buff ground colour of the shell. Some of these are two inches long, and nearly as much broad. The other species of *Cassis* is considerably less, and thicker, with a smooth thickened outer lip, and small puckers or tubercles on the upper part of the larger whorl. The colour of these shells is various; some being a pale buff, others a shaded chestnut brown, and some nearly black.

A pretty little white *Columbella,* common here, used to be much collected by the female aborigines, for making necklaces; some of which were several yards long, formed of these little shells neatly bored, and strung closely on kangaroo sinews, and were worn by their sable owners twisted many times round the neck, and hanging low over the breast.

The shell which used to be hailed with the cry of greatest triumph at its capture, was a *Volute;* a fine, smooth, heavy, important-looking shell, which made the smaller fry in our baskets comparatively insignificant. Its usual size was about three inches or more in length, by about one and a half in breadth; its colour a pale buff or nankin colour, and this softly clouded with dim purple, and marked most singularly with fine brown zig-zag lines forming deep points and angles; the symmetry and connection of these delicate, yet bold and distinct pencillings being most curious. The inner part of the shell, which has three plaits on the columella, is of a deeper shade of buff, and the whole shell is finely polished and very ornamental. I have in England seen a figure of it, or one very similar, in the coloured plates of a conchological work; but the artist evidently had not enjoyed my good fortune in seeing perfect and live shells, for it was a very sorry portrait of my favourite. The animal itself bears the same colours and marking as its shell, but even brighter.

Cypræa castanea was not unfrequently found; and a pretty buff-coloured *Ancillaria* was one of

the commonest shells in the collections I used to receive from this place years ago, although when rambling on the beaches myself, I did not frequently find it.

One species of Cone was all we had to represent that splendid family; nor was this one a very brilliant specimen, being usually small, from one to two inches long, of a dull ash colour, irregularly clouded with reddish brown.

I think I have now enumerated all the shells, or very nearly so, which are found at Swan Port. In addition to shells, several beautiful kinds of corallines were frequently thrown up in great quantities; but, after becoming dry, my "treasures of the deep" in this department always fell to pieces, from, as I imagined, the drying-up of the slender animal threads which passed through and connected the joints during life. Some of these corallines were snow-white, others tinged with pink or green, and all most delicate and beautiful; one might fancy that the tricksy sea-sprites had been trying to model some of our upper-world moss and joint grasses with the sculpturesque materials of their ocean caves.

Several species of *Echinus*, too, visited us occa-

sionally, the commonest being brown and nearly globular, with short thin spines. Another kind, less often found, was of a flatter shape, from one and a half to three inches across, greenish or purple in colour, and covered with strong pointed quill-like spines half an inch long. The third and rarest species closely resembled the *Echinus mammillatus* (fossil) of the English chalk formation in the general form and the large tubercles on the shell; the spines were large shelly tubes, the size of a wheat straw, sometimes an inch long, and the same thickness from end to end, moving upon the tubercles as on a pivot.

Some of the Star-fish here were gigantic, many measuring above a foot across; great, thick, solid, slimy, long-armed creatures, that I found most difficult to preserve (from the quantity of moist animal matter they contained), unless when they had been thoroughly sun-dried on the warm sands. These had eight or ten arms each; other smaller species had only five, and one kind had no arms at all, but was in form a pentagon or hexagon, with the points protruding but very slightly; the whole covered on both sides with shelly plates and tubercles, and, when freshly caught, of brilliant

colours, orange, scarlet, and purple, and varying in size from one inch across to two or three.

The sponges too, which I frequently found, were very singular; sometimes a great mass of porous, prickly, slimy stuff lay upon the beach, glowing in the most vivid scarlet hue that can be imagined; and when I first saw these fiery appearances, I used to hasten towards them, wondering what new prize awaited me. One day, having carried a thick rolled pudding-shaped mass home, in hopes of preserving it in its brilliant colour, I took it to the fresh water to wash and squeeze out the slimy matter, and whilst so employed a severe sensation of prickly tingling and stinging attacked my hands, which became red and inflamed, and the symptoms rapidly extended up my arms. A young relative who was helping me suffered in a similar manner, and we felt rather apprehensive as to the consequences of our experiment; but fortunately the discomfort of feeling for a day or two as if we had been stung by nettles, was the only ill result we experienced; and I have never since attempted to take such liberties with the red rolled pudding sponges. Indeed, my adventure with this individual sponge reminded me very forcibly of Miss Edgeworth's story of Rosa-

mond and the blue jar; for the splendid colour that had so dazzled me seemed to reside wholly in that very slimy stuff I had taken such pains to squeeze out, and when that was gone, and my sponge dry, it was merely a dull brown!

CHAPTER X.

Our New Home of "Riversdale."—Colonial Housewifery.—Female Servants.—Progress at Spring Vale.—A Dead-wood Fence.—Buildings.—Site and Plans.—Materials.—Timber.—Lightwood Tree.—Stone.—Clearing Fields.—Green Marshes.—Honeysuckle Tree.—Wattle Tree.—Brushy Pine.

For some time our own future destination remained uncertain, until it was at length arranged that Mr. Meredith should purchase a small estate of about 1200 acres, situated seven miles inland, north of Cambria, and adjoining, or rather forming, one corner of the Meredith estate. The situation of "Spring Vale" had won our admiration, although as yet the land remained in a state of nature, and required a great outlay of money and labour to render it habitable or profitable.

In May, 1841, we temporarily set up our vagrant household gods in a house then vacant at Riversdale, which, being within three miles of Spring Vale, formed a convenient abode for us during the erection

of our own cottage. Once again I was busily and pleasantly occupied in making a new place look as much like an old home as possible. The favourite pictures of dear old faces soon peopled the strange walls with loved familiar looks. The rooms were large and good, and though at first not too amply furnished, had a cheerful and cosy aspect. Our little pet soon after our removal began to trot about, and the sweet little voice, as musical as a bird's, that went humming and carolling from room to room, was, to parental ears, a sound that would make any spot charming.

And now began my real experience of colonial housewifery and its attendant troubles, although these did not prove very distressing, and nearly all originated in servants; but, as I dislike hearing my neighbours' long narratives of their domestics' delinquencies, I shall not inflict a very minute detail of my individual sufferings upon my own kind friends. Prisoner women servants are generally of a far lower grade than the men, and at the time of which I now write, Mrs. Bowden had not begun her admirable reformatory work among them. My first prisoner nurse-girl was taken at random by our agent in Hobarton, from among the herd of incor-

rigibles in the female house of correction, or "Factory," as it is termed; and was indeed a notable example:—*dirty*, beyond all imagining! she drank rum, smoked tobacco, swore awfully, and was in all respects the lowest specimen of womankind I ever had the sorrow to behold. Before I had time to procure another, she drank herself into violent fits, so that four men could not hold her from knocking herself against the walls and floor, then went to the hospital, and, finally, got married!

Various fortune attended me after this memorable beginning, but I never had such signal ill-luck again, and we have usually kept our female servants longer than most other families; and when they have left us, marriage has been the usual cause. One, a Highland girl, I, in my too charitable innocence, believed to be really good, virtuous, and honest, and truly repentant of her former misdeeds: she was a kind nurse to our little boy, and a cheerful obliging servant; she remained with us six months, professing the most devoted gratitude for our kindness to her, when, during an illness which confined me to my bed, she took from beneath my pillow the key of the store, and, with the assistance of the groom, drank and otherwise disposed of some

six or eight dozens of wine and spirits. The effects of such extensive libations being soon evident, the worthy pair were dismissed, the maid being sentenced to six months' hard labour at the "wash-tubs" in the Factory, and the man to a "chain-gang" on the roads for two years. My housemaid was at the time in the "cells," suffering fourteen days' solitary imprisonment (or, as they term it, "*doing solitary*"), for striking her fellow-servant, the nurse. She returned afterwards much improved, and remained with us until she married. The successor of my hopeful Highland protégé was a short, clever, brisk, good-tempered Yorkshire woman, who stayed with us a year and a half, and then married comfortably. With such chances and changes progressed my new household; but I have never since detected any act of dishonesty in one of our servants, though all have been prisoners. The offices of "cook" and "kitchen-maid" are here generally filled by men, as cutting wood and carrying water we considered to be too laborious for women.

Mr. Meredith meanwhile was indefatigably industrious in the improvement and civilization of our new place, "Spring Vale"—so named from the

bright springs of pure water rising in the low lands. Early after breakfast every morning, often in winter while the stars were yet shining in the sky, my husband rode or walked up from Riversdale to direct and assist in the work going on, nor returned to dinner until late in the evening; so that my days would have been very lonely, had I not had my dear little boy to cheer them. Still, these were days full of pleasant hopefulness, and we looked forward with great delight to the completion of our plans, and our final removal to our own snug home—the home in which we purposed to live quietly through the remaining years of our sojourn on this side of the globe.

But much had to be done even before the house could be begun. Wheat was still ten shillings the bushel (the price during the famine in New South Wales had been twenty-six shillings the bushel), and we needed to have some of our own for the next year's consumption and seed; May was nearly gone, and the next February must see our first little crop ready for the sickle, on land which as yet plough had never broken, and which was heavily timbered with large gum-trees. To clear the ground was the first thing to be done: oxen

and implements were purchased, and men hired to fell the trees, grub up the roots, and cut the ponderous trunks and branches into lengths to form a "dead-wood fence," that is, a mass of timber four or five feet thick, and five or six high, the lower part being formed of the enormous trunks of trees, cut into logs six or eight feet long, laid side by side, and the upper portion consisting of the smaller branches skilfully laid over, or stuck down and intertwisted.

A very old ruinous shepherd's hut served, when patched up, for some of the labourers to live in, until the new stone one could be built, and when this was finished, the old stonemason was to commence our cottage. I believe that a large proportion of the stone and brick buildings both in and around Swan Port are the work of the same man—one of those thin, wiry, withered, erect old people who look just the same for forty years together, never were known to look young, and never seem to grow a month older; at all events, I can see no difference in our old friend of the trowel since he first began chipping the ironstone and dabbing the mortar about in our service, nine years ago, although, when he began working for us,

I well remember feeling some misgivings as to his living long enough to finish even the first building.

We had often visited and carefully noted the relative advantages of several sites for our cottage, before making our final selection, as we wished it to be sheltered from the prevailing high winds, near the fresh water, and at no great distance from the public road, which passed through our land, the shape of which was triangular. A rocky range of high hills, or "the Tier," as it is generally termed, forms the northern boundary; the "Swan," or "Big River," the eastern; and the "Cygnet," or "Brushy" River, the western; these two uniting at the south point. We finally decided on placing our house on a rocky bank facing the south-east, at the foot of which we purposed having our garden, whilst the stabling and outhouses would occupy the higher level ground behind the house.

I made innumerable plans, each seeming to me in its turn perfectly unexceptionable, until my husband, with his awful precision of compasses and calculation of "ways and means," ranged in array against me, proved one after another their impracticability. At last a partnership plan was concocted, to our mutual satisfaction, combining

comfort and economy with a sufficient regard for appearance; and materials requisite for its completion were carefully calculated and ordered. Some of these consisted of what is here technically termed "sawed stuff" and "split stuff," by which is meant timber which is *sawn* into regular forms and thicknesses, as flooring boards, joists, battens, &c., and that which is *split* into "posts and rails," slabs, or paling. Some of the species of *Eucalyptus*, or gum-trees, are peculiarly adapted for splitting. The peppermint-tree (*Eucalyptus piperita*) and the "Stringy Bark" are remarkable for the perfectly straight grain which they often exhibit, and are split with surprising evenness and regularity into paling and boards for "weather-boarding" houses and other purposes, in lengths of six or eight feet by one foot wide, and half or one-third of an inch thick. The great height to which the trees grow before the branches begin, leaves a large space free from knots or twists of any kind; any curve in a tree renders it unfit for splitting, but the crooked-grained wood is best for sawing, being less liable to split whilst being worked or nailed. All houses in the colony, with few exceptions, are roofed with split shingles. The species of gum-trees called

"iron-bark" and "stringy-bark" are extremely hard, and, when well planed and polished, bear some resemblance to oak, and are much and successfully used in colonial shipbuilding; but the cedar of New South Wales, and the "Lightwood" or "Blackwood" (*Acacia melanoxylon*) are used here for all the ornamental parts of house-fittings, and, when nicely finished and polished, are equal in appearance to mahogany, giving a far neater aspect to a room than the painted doors, wainscots, and window-frames used in middle-class houses in England. The lightwood is a harder and more closely grained wood than the cedar; it is also more finely marked, and is capable of a more perfect polish. When growing, it is generally a very handsome tree, and the dense foliage affords a better shade than most other Tasmanian forest trees. It commonly attains the height of thirty or forty feet, but in moist sheltered mountain gullies very far exceeds that size. I have seen some upwards of a hundred feet high. The leaves are a long oval in shape, of a dry dim texture, alike on both sides, longitudinally veined, without any distinct midrib, and are of a yellow green colour, which, with the round, compact, lumpish form of the tree,

gives it a slightly oak-like character in the distant landscape, to the beauty of which a group, or a few single lightwood trees, are a valuable addition. The bark, too, is rough and compact, more like the trees of the Old World than the riband-stripping smooth white trunks of the gum-trees. The little round blossoms of palest yellow, which in spring come out all over the tree, give a soft fresh bloomy aspect to its evergreen garb, and perfume the air with their hawthorn scent; when near an apiary, they are ever "musical with bees," and seem to yield the busy little creatures an ample store both of wax and honey. One singularly handsome tree of this kind we marked for preservation, amidst the doomed throng of less eligible residents on the piece of scrub and forest destined to become our garden.

The walls of our cottage were to be built of the common "iron-stone" of the country, quarried from the bank where it was to stand, the cleavage of which very conveniently separates it into flat slabs of all sizes and thicknesses, suitable for rough stone buildings; and, when well fitted and cemented together, and neatly faced with cut freestone at all the corners, door and window cases, &c., it makes a most substantial fabric. Our outer

walls were twenty inches thick, and the inner ones eighteen.

The grove of wattle-trees speedily disappeared from the bank, around the growing cottage, excepting a few handsome groups or single trees reserved for ornament; and the various details of quarrying, burning shells into lime, sawing, and carting, all went briskly on.

The first field being once cleared, fenced, ploughed, and sown, other land underwent the same transformation. I often vainly interceded for the life of some noble tree, which, as its tall kindred fell all around it, looked so grand and ornamental, and so pleasing an object in the general clearance, that I would gladly have preserved it; but the harbour which trees in the middle of fields afford to the opossums, and the destructive, but most beautiful, little parrots which abound here, was always urged against me, and the death-doom was rarely averted, even by my most eloquent pleading: still, both our lovely rivers being skirted by forest land and fine belts of trees, besides the numbers which adorned the unploughed marsh and sheep-run, amply redeemed our pretty spot from the charge of bareness, usually so well merited by colonial farms.

Each time that I rode or walked up from Riversdale, some evident improvement was visible, in clearing, fencing, draining, or building; and, as spring advanced, the sheep and cattle feeding in the deep, long, green grass of the marshes, and the pretty little soft white lambs skipping about, looked like a bit of England. How beautiful were our broad deep drains, with bright cold water bubbling up in them from countless springs, and flowing generously along in a never-failing stream! And how often we used to stand in our green meadows, looking into them, and talking of the dry and parched ground of our homes at Homebush and Bathurst, as a kind of additional zest to our keen enjoyment of the inestimable blessings of a temperate climate and abundance of pure water!

Perhaps my use of the common colonial term "marsh" may be misunderstood at home, as I remember that I myself associated it at first with the idea of a swamp; but a "marsh" here is what would in England be called a meadow, with this difference, that in our marshes, until partially drained, a growth of tea-trees (*Leptospermum*) and rushes in some measure encumbers them; but, after a short time, these die off, and are trampled down,

and a thick sward of verdant grass covers the whole extent: such is our "marsh"—a fine meadow of 180 or 200 acres, and green in the driest season. The open forest land skirts it on all sides, except where fenced corn-fields intervene, so that the horses and cattle live most luxuriously, in sunshine or shade, as they like best, as in many parts of the "scrub" are groups of honeysuckle-trees, so dense that even rain can scarcely penetrate them.

The honeysuckle-tree (*Banksia latifolia*) is so unreasonably named, that I must not pass it by without a remark; nor have I quite forgiven it for disappointing me by being so *very* unlike any sort or species of the sweet old flower whose name it so unfittingly bears. I cannot remember any Old-World tree to which I can in any way compare it: it might be pretty well represented by one of the tall muff-like grenadier's caps, set on a stick; the latter being the short trunk, and the cap the dark, thick, solid-looking foliage of the tree. The leaves are rather small, and generally of a dull rusty olive-green, except when the young spring shoots cast a gleam of fresher colour over the sombre mass. The blossoms form cones, which, when in full bloom, are much the size and shape of a large English teazel,

and are of a greenish yellow; they are scentless, until the pollen is shed, when a faint odour, not particularly pleasant, is just perceptible; but birds and insects seem to discover honey in them. The honeysuckle trees grow to about thirty feet in height, and often form fine groups in the open landscape, as, when several grow together, their formal outline is not preserved, and in hot weather they are valuable, from the dense shade they afford. The wood is of a singularly fibrous texture, and is used to make "knees" in boat-building and some other purposes, but is not very much prized for fire-wood; for the latter purpose, wattle (*Acacia*) and shroak (*Casuarina*) are most valued, and many of the gum-tree woods burn well and brightly.

I have never seen the lovely common wattles grow so luxuriantly, or form such ornamental trees and groves, as at Spring Vale; and I often thought, if I could give a sly rub to Aladdin's glorious old lamp, and order the obedient Genii to transport some of the graceful golden-fringed trees into certain pretty gardens and shrubberies at home, how enraptured the beholders would be! Nothing can be more beautiful than some of them; tall and elegant, from twenty to forty feet high, thick with their

delicate "sensitive plant" foliage, feathery and pendulous; and covered, from the very summit to the branches that bend and sweep the ground, with the bright canary-coloured blossoms. Canopies and roofs of gold and jewels, such as dazzled our fancy in old fairy-tales, are no longer fables, when, pushing aside some heavy down-bending bough, we creep beneath, and stand within the natural bower of one of these exquisite trees in full bloom.

A very beautiful species of pine, or rather, I imagine, a cypress, grows in and near the river-beds here, in great abundance and luxuriance, varying from nine to twenty-five feet in height; I know not its proper name, but here it is called "the brushy pine." It forms a perfect cone of verdure, narrowing to a point at the top, the deep rich green being sometimes tinged with a bluish shade, almost like the bloom on a grape. Not a portion of the stem is visible in a well-grown tree of this kind; but the whole is a compact mass of foliage, more perfect in form than the most accurately-clipped box or yew of an antique garden, and necessarily far more beautiful, from such being the natural shape, with the slender terminal sprays all uninjured. The cones are small, and clustered together in brown

knobs or bunches close to the branches. Plants are entirely raised from seed, which grow well in moist and shady situations. Our river banks are in many places absolute groves of these very handsome trees, of all ages and heights; but most beautiful when, as is frequently the case, they form nice family groups of one, two, or more tall middle-aged trees, with a rising generation of symmetrical young cones clustered around them.

WEEPING GUM-TREES AND OLD FORGE.

CHAPTER XI.

Home Occupations.—The "Weeping Gum" Tree.—Household Duties.—Society. — Snakes. — Quail. — Wattle-Birds. — Walks. —Wild Flowers. — Acacias. — "Wattling." — Parasite Creepers. — Native Mistletoe.—Clematis.—Comesperma.—A "Dry Path."—The First Stack.—Melancholy Accident.—Losses.

THE spring and summer of 1841-2 wore away, and our home was progressing, but much too slowly for our wishes; for it may well be believed how eager we were to remove thither, and put an end to the weary daily travel to and fro, and my long lonely days away from all that interested me, save my children, for we had now two.

Sometimes I added to my little collection of portraits of the pretty native flowers, or improved myself in sketching gum-trees, which I found demanded far greater care in their delineation, even in my slight pencil sketches, than I had at first been disposed to accord them: a gaunt straggling tree, that will persist in showing all its twisted elbows, and bare Briarean arms, with only tufts of leaves at the fingers' ends, is quite a different affair from a round compact oak or elm, decently apparelled in a proper quantity of foliage. A kind of *Eucalyptus*, with long drooping leaves, called the "Weeping Gum," is the most elegant of the family, and is generally very well dressed. A group of these, which gracefully drooped over and beside a blacksmith's forge, near us, always won my admiration as I passed them on my way to Spring Vale, where some of the *Eucalyptus* trees growing on the rich lowlands are really very beautiful, and would be deemed so even amidst the magnificent patriarchal oaks of an English park; large, lofty, with dense glossy foliage, and finely grown, they have more the character of a Portugal laurel grown into a forest tree, than anything else I remember at Home.

Sometimes, but very rarely, we were so fortunate as to obtain the loan of a new book, and great was the delight of such an acquisition, for our reading was usually limited to the old familiar volumes of our own small library, and the English newspapers, with which the kindness of our home friends supplied us. The regular transmission of the wise and witty "Examiner" has been a source of great enjoyment to us in our exile, and serves to keep us comparatively acquainted with the doings of the civilized world. Reviews of charming books that one cannot procure, and notices of glorious pictures that one will never see, are truly often provoking enough; but yet it is pleasant to receive such renewed proofs that the great and good of the Old World are still labouring in their vocation for the delight of millions who, more fortunate than ourselves in this particular, can and do enjoy in reality what we now but dimly imagine.

Sometimes in the summer we joined the pic-nic parties from Cambria; and sometimes, after exhausting my small store of the simple airs and merry old tunes—my husband's favourites—that I could play from memory, I resolutely dived among my old music books, loaded the piano-desk, and filled

up an evening with somewhat lame revivals of the strains of other, although not happier, days; but all these were indulgences in my usual sewing, nursing, housekeeping life.

At first I found the business of the store-room the most novel of my household duties, and the weekly or semi-weekly distribution of rations the least pleasant of them, as, besides our own hired farm-servants—who of course received their supplies from us—there were the sawyers, stonemasons, carpenters, drainers, and fencers, all of whom we had to supply with flower, meat, tea, sugar, salt, soap, tobacco and "slops" (*i. e.*, shirts, trowsers, jackets, &c.); so that accurate accounts must be kept, and I confess I did not much admire this indispensable huckster's shop affair, the business of which also included the giving out materials for the building and articles for farm use, such as nails of all kinds, rope, files, glass, glue, oil, paint, whiting, turpentine, blankets, bed-tick, rugs, wine, and other commodities; but all this is (or rather was at the time in question) a matter of course in a settler's establishment.

Several small coasting vessels find continual employment in the trade between Swan Port and

Hobarton, in conveying the settler's produce to the town, and bringing back the supplies they require. The land transit being all but impracticable for a cart, no goods are conveyed by it, except when some adventurous hawker succeeds in forcing his weary horses across the mountain barrier; and everything we require, from a cask of wine or ton of sugar, down to a sheet of pins or a pair of gloves, must be brought by water to Swansea, and thence home in our carts*.

Our circle of society at Swan Port was limited to two or three individuals beyond our own family, although the population of the district is numerically large, and comprises many industrious and thriving settlers, who were our very good and respected neighbours, and whose neat well-conducted farms are examples to most other rural districts in the island. We had no inducement to go from our home, except to our father's; and of course family visitings to and fro formed a regular and very pleasant part of our weekly duties.

* Since the above was written, the little settlement of Swansea has so far increased in importance, that two good stores of the "general" class are now established there, and appear to carry on a considerable trade in grocery, drapery, ironmongery, haberdashery, confectionary, crockery, glass, timber, slop clothing, ale, porter, salt beef and other provisions, flour, and *et ceteras* infinite.

The quantity of snakes which were destroyed at Spring Vale during this summer was truly alarming; scarcely a day passed without Mr. Meredith's telling me on his return home that one, two, or more had been killed by himself or the men. One day he had gone out rabbit-shooting there with Dr. Alexander (28th Regiment), then visiting us, accompanied by our old pointer and a favourite spaniel. The latter, whilst hunting busily about, suddenly uttered a short yelp, as if slightly hurt, and the next moment Dr. A. shot a large black snake, which it was found had bitten her in the nose; so that excision of the part was impossible. The poor little creature went on hunting for a few minutes, when she seemed to grow dizzy, and reeled about; then lay down, trying several times to get up and hunt, but very soon she became violently convulsed and sick, then foamed at the mouth, and died in less than twenty-five minutes from the time she was bitten.

A short time previously to this, Mr. Meredith was on the jury at an inquest held on a poor shepherd, servant to a settler in the neighbourhood, who, whilst out one day with some of his employer's family, saw a large black snake raising itself to

attack him, and made a blow at it with a rotten stick, which broke off short, and the snake, enraged but not hurt, bit his wrist. No remedies were attempted, but the poor fellow continued his occupation, till, feeling too ill to proceed, he went to a hut in the neighbourhood, where one of his fellow-servants lived, who was married. These good people did all that their kind feeling suggested, or their means allowed, for his comfort; they laid him in their only bed, and set up tending him all night, but he became rapidly worse and insensible, and early in the morning died.

Such terrible evidence of the black snake's mortal venom was not calculated to diminish my horror of the whole fearful tribe, and often in walking through long tussock grass or low scrub I have shrunk aghast, as my foot fell on some round stick, or a rustling in the dead leaves came with a boding sound upon my ear.

One day as I sat at home sewing, with my eldest child playing about on the floor, our favourite cat jumped in through an open window, and began pawing and tossing something under a chair. Little George immediately went towards her, and seemed highly diverted, crawling nearer and nearer,

and trying with his baby-talk to attract my attention to his playfellow: looking down, I saw what I supposed to be a lizard, and being vexed with the cat for hurting the harmless little thing, drove her away, when, to my horror, there lay a snake, writhing and curling most actively; so, holding the child and the cat both away, I ordered the unwelcome guest to be very summarily despatched.

So many "narrow escapes" from snakes are related here, that the comparative rarity of serious accidents is perhaps the most remarkable. Whilst at Cambria, my nursemaid, a free girl from London, who had never seen a snake, was one day crossing the court-yard with the child in her arms, when she saw what she fancied was a large eel gliding along; and, calling to the cook that one of his fish had got away, was on the point of seizing it in her hand, when the man screamed out to her that it was a snake, and so indeed it was, a very large one. They are apparently fond of lurking in quiet sly corners near the house, perhaps for the purpose of catching mice; and, to their other unpleasant propensities, I must add a *penchant* for quail. Mr. Meredith, in walking to Spring Vale one day, was passing quickly through some

long tussock grass, and saw a large black snake swiftly and silently gliding along, with its glittering eyes fixed on some low object which it seemed eagerly pursuing, without heeding his approach. The next moment he saw a brace of quail run out from the spot and take wing, but the snake had vanished before he could pick up a stick to destroy it. I heard the other day, from good authority, of a snake which was killed having four parrots quite entire, and scarcely ruffled in plumage, taken from its stomach; the parrots in question being, it should be added, each about the size of a thrush.

The quail, the sole representative here, save the rarely-coming migratory snipe, of the delicious game of the Old World, is a delicate little bird about half the size of the partridge, with somewhat similar beautiful brown plumage, but they are not generally numerous.

The wattle birds (*Anthochœra* —— ?) are a less rare delicacy, and I now think them very nice, although their flavour is too peculiar to be wholly liked at first. They are extremely pretty; about the size of a blackbird; the back plumage is dark gray, tipped with white, with a long tail of the same colours; the under part is lighter, with a

bright shade of amber on the breast, and a tinge of the same colour blending in other parts with the gray. The graceful head is adorned with a pair of long pendant ear-drops or "wattles," formed of a bright orange-coloured bag-like membrane, about an inch and a half long, and a quarter of an inch, or rather more, in width, pale in colour next the head, but deepening at the end to the hue of the *Ecremocarpus* blossoms. These, as the active merry birds dance about the branches, and twist their heads in all kinds of elegant arch coquettish attitudes, remind me of the long gold earrings of some pretty, vain, fine lady. Their common note seems to be four or five syllables of some unknown, rather guttural, language, which I have in vain tried to pronounce, so cannot be expected to spell, but it sounds something like "cockaty-rucki! cockaty-rucki!" Their tongue is very long, and, being divided at the end like a thin hair pencil, is well adapted for extracting the honey from the *Eucalyptus* blossoms which forms their chief food, and their flavour partakes very strongly of the powerful aromatic property of the trees. The wattle-birds are not always equally plentiful, but about one year in three they positively abound.

Mr. Meredith used sometimes to go out before breakfast, and in a few minutes shoot a dozen within fifty yards of the house. When plucked, they are found, if in proper condition, to be enveloped in a thick layer of yellow fat, and in roasting amply "baste" themselves. They are dressed entire, the same as woodcocks, and form a valuable addition to the country bill of fare, which cannot generally be accused of having too much variety.

The house of Riversdale, which we now occupied, being, with the adjacent water-mill and other buildings, the centre of a large agricultural farm, I had not many nice wild-wood walks near home. The road leading to Spring Vale, which for the first mile passed over a sandy forest tract, was my favourite, as the "Bush" on either side afforded abundance of wild flowers. In spring several kinds of white *Epacris* came out in bloom, and the shrubs, bearing different sorts of yellow pea-blossoms, abounded: some richly tinged and veined with scarlet or brown, their foliage, consisting of little more than bare green spines, as difficult to gather as gorse itself; others had leaves spined at each point, whilst many more were rather less repulsive in their manners, yet without being very inviting.

A more amiable family were the Acacias, or, as called here, "wattles," so named originally, I conceive, from several of the genus being much used for "wattling" fences or huts. A "wattle and dab" hut is formed, in a somewhat Robinson Crusoe style, of stout stakes driven well into the ground, and thickly interlaced with the tough lithe wattle-branches, so as to make a strong basket-work, which is then dabbed and plastered over on both sides with tenacious clay, mortar, and, finally, thatched. I have also heard of a refractory wife being occasionally subjected by her liege lord to a process of "wattling," but this I imagine implies an application of the acacia boughs of a totally different nature to that above described, although, as I have been assured, it proves, in some cases, singularly efficacious. All the acacias bear pretty, soft, yellow fringe-blossoms; but it were needless to describe them minutely, as, long even ere I left England, the species most common here were to be found in every greenhouse or conservatory.

One almost microscopic white flower (*Leucopogon* ——), growing on a low shrub, was very beautiful when closely examined, each tiny petal, scarcely the size of a small pin's head, being

exquisitely fringed with short white filaments. The bright geranium-coloured *Kennedia prostrata* crept along the ground, its rusty olive-green trifid leaves being seldom noticed until, on stooping to pick up the glowing little pea-flower, we found out the far-spread net-work of stems and leaves belonging to it.

The gay clustering wattle blossoms were, whilst they lasted, my usual substitute for the dear buttercups and daisies that fill little hands at Home. There was, certainly, a thin, lanky-looking, white Aster, which I tried to call a daisy, and the *Richea glauca*, with its round yellow ball of florets, I often gathered for my little boy, completing his small handful with the really pretty Australian hare-bell, as blue as his own sunny eyes, and the gay wild pink convolvulus, not brighter than his cheeks; but even these seemed sorry substitutes for the dear old cowslips and primroses, buttercups and daisies, woodbines and foxgloves, and the thousand and one sweet and lovely flowers that English country children revel in.

The low bushes of a small species of *Casuarina*, that grew beside my oft-traversed path to Spring Vale, were tenanted by a curious kind of parasitic

plant; and I bestowed upon it sundry minute investigations, in the vain hope of discovering its name and family connections. Its multitudinous, slender, thread-like stems, ravelled, and twisted, and woven together in hopeless entanglement, spreading over, and round, and through the casuarina bushes, were always traceable to one small disc or foot, fastened to a branch, smaller discs being attached at intervals, to other limbs of the victim, until the devouring little climber reached the summit of the bush, and spread abroad its slight tendril arms to lay hold of some loftier support. The stems were seldom thicker than sewing cotton, and destitute of leaves, but very minute white starry flowers, less than small pins' heads, made microscopic constellations all amongst the mazy coil, and were duly succeeded by little, long, oval-shaped berries, about one-fifth of an inch long. I have seen several species of this kind of native parasite since, but all are of a much larger description, covering trees of moderate height so entirely as to hide and destroy them, and causing them to present a most strange and often grotesque appearance; these creepers have stems like thick cord or rope, twisted and knotted strongly together, and so tough as with some diffi-

culty to be cut or broken. They are nearly, if not quite, destitute of foliage, and bear round berries, like those of the bryony at Home, sometimes as large as good grapes. Some persons, with more approach to reason than most of the colonial terms can boast, have named these plants "native mistletoe."

One of the loveliest climbing plants of this, or indeed of any other country, is the native Clematis (*C. blanda*), which joins to a luxuriant growth of handsome foliage the most abundant and graceful display of blossoms that I have seen in any of the beautiful tribe. The flowers are large and quite white, growing in full handsome clusters, thickly placed, and making the most exquisite garlands imaginable, when a single stem can be culled by itself; but in its lavish and luxuriant wild growth, it spreads over the near bushes, trees, or ferns, in such a rich close mass of clustering flowers and intertwisted leaves, that I have often found it easier to gather a mat large enough for a mantle than to disentangle a wreath for George's little straw hat. The scent, too, is very delicious, and the starry heads of feathery seeds in autumn are only less beautiful than the summer flowers.

A dwarf species of clematis (*C. gentianoides*) grew plentifully on a stony hill between Riversdale and Spring Vale, reminding me pleasantly of the pretty little white wood anemone of England. The single white flowers, on stems five or six inches high, appear on small roots with bright green leaves; they are very delicate and fragrant, and would probably improve or become double by culture.

Once, as we were driving to Cambria, I saw at a short distance from the road what seemed to me a bright blue silk handkerchief spread over a tall shrub, and, on alighting to investigate the mystery, discovered, for the first time, my now familiar friend, the most beautiful Comesperma (*C. volubilis*), whose exquisite gleaming blossoms formed a perfect cover to the bush they had climbed over. The small winged flowers are produced in such abundance, that the green stems scarcely show at all, merely forming an intertwisted and netted groundwork for the dainty broidery of living sapphires which they support. Often, when I have gathered chaplets of this most exquisite creeper, I have wished I could transfer them to the glossy hair of some of my dear young countrywomen, and dis-

place their mimic coronals of cambric and wire with my bright flowers of the wild wood. The chief use I have put them to has been to adorn my baby's caps; and between the lace-borders, one or two slender tendrils of comesperma, covered with blossoms, excelled all the ribbon that ever was woven.

The summer of this year was particularly dry, and most of the watercourses were empty, save here and there where deep pools occurred in their stony beds. One day a slight shower had fallen, and I was hesitating whether it were wise for us to go for our usual walk, as the long reedy leaves of the cutting grass, and other plants, hold the moisture, and might wet our feet; when a young relative, then visiting us, earnestly exclaimed—"Oh! but *I* know where we can have a delightful walk, if we go down the lane, and then turn and go up the bed of the river; it is sure to be nice and dry there!"

Truly, thought I, we *are* at the Antipodes!

Sheep-shearing in November, hot midsummer weather at Christmas, the bed of a river the driest walk, and corn harvest in February, were things strangely at variance with my Old-World notions. The result of our first harvest from thirteen acres

was highly satisfactory, and I went up to see the little wheat-stack, and surveyed it on all sides with more real genuine pleasure than those twenty times its size have given me since.

The satisfaction with which we urged on our works of improvement at Spring Vale was at this time sadly checked by the distressing and sudden death of a worthy man, formerly a prisoner, who had for many years been a good industrious servant in the family, and was now employed with others in "grubbing" a piece of new land which was heavily timbered. One of the ponderous trees, of eight or nine feet girth was, in the usual way, severed from its main supports by a great trench being dug round the foot of the tree, and the roots chopped through; the huge trunk was just ready to fall, and Mr. Meredith, who was there observing the work, saw it giving way, and called to the men to jump out of the trench, which they did, and were all perfectly safe; but this one poor fellow, although an "old hand" at such labour, in some strange confusion of mind, stepped back again, exactly under the falling tree, which, gaining rapid impetus as it came, fell, before there was a chance of snatching him from destruction, and the whole ponderous mass

crushed him to death instantaneously. The tree was sawn through on either side as quickly as possible, and the unfortunate man's body extricated, but life must have become extinct in the very moment of the frightful accident.

The comparative rarity of such terrible calamities in new countries where "clearing" is perpetually going on, is even more remarkable than their occasional occurrence; but the imprudence of persons who pursue these needful but certainly dangerous tasks, alone, is a wilful risk of life. Not long ago we heard of a horrible instance of this. A poor industrious man went from home one morning, as usual, to the piece of ground he was clearing at some distance; but, on his not returning at night, his wife supposed he had gone on some business he had to attend to a few miles off, and no alarm was felt about him until the lapse of several days, when, on a search being made, his dead body was found on his own clearing, with one leg broken by a heavy tree which had fallen on it. The poor creature had evidently made the most desperate efforts to extricate himself; his hands and face were torn and lacerated, and the broken leg almost dragged off in his attempts to get free, but all had been in vain:

he must have died in a state of agony, starvation, and despair, absolutely frightful to imagine; whilst if a fellow labourer had been near to saw the tree through, all, save the fracture of the leg, would have been avoided.

Many disheartening reports of the disastrous state of affairs in New South Wales had reached us since we came to Van Diemen's Land, and the non-appearance of various sums of money in rents, bills, &c., which were falling due to us, supplied unpleasing corroboration of the rumours; but we were totally unprepared for the discovery which now overwhelmed us—that some of the insolvencies in Sydney involved the loss of all we owned in that colony. Until now the thought of returning to England in the course of ten or twelve years had abode with us like a pleasant, although rather distant, prospect, which Hope's telescopic vision ever brought nearer and more distinctly before us; but at this cruel blow the fairy-picture shrank and faded away into the smallest and dimmest shadow of its former self, and ever since Hope seems to show it to us only through the wrong end of the telescope!

CHAPTER XII.

The Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land.—Their First Murders of the Settlers.—"Mosquito."—Murders at Swan Port.—The Murderers chased.—A Native Shot dead.—Warning by Native Women.—Murder of Robert Gay.—Native Woman wounded.—John Raynor.—Attack on Buxton's Cottage.—Burning and Murders near Jericho.—Murder of the Hooper Family.—Murders at St. Paul's Plains.—Erroneous Impressions.—Aborigines Removed.

EVEN in so slight a description of a new country as mine is, some notice of the aboriginal inhabitants may naturally be expected; and although from personal observations I know nothing respecting them, Mr. Meredith's long and disastrous experience of their character and habits enables me to give some particulars, which may possibly tend to a more correct estimate being entertained at Home of the strife so long existing between them and the colonists.

Seven or eight years before my arrival in this colony, the aborigines had been removed to Flinder's Island in Bass Straits, where large and comfortable

dwellings were erected for them, and they were well clothed, fed, and instructed at the expense of the Colonial Government, under the care of a resident medical superintendent, until the year 1847, when his Excellency Sir W. T. Denison, our present lieutenant-governor, imagining that they might be rendered more happy, and be more efficiently superintended here, caused those remaining to be brought again to the colony, and a new establishment has been accordingly formed on the west shore of D'Entrecasteaux' channel, where they now are. Of the charitable and humane feelings which actuated Sir W. Denison, but one opinion can be entertained. How far he was justified in gratifying them by making this change is a separate question, as the colonists, especially those who had formerly suffered such fearful experience of the aboriginal ferocity and cruelty, were strenuously opposed to the measure—on the grounds that every adult man among the natives had been actively engaged in many, some of them in hundreds, of most brutal and unprovoked murders, and that in all probability a return to their old haunts would lead to a renewal of the horrors which, since their removal, have been unknown, but which in former years

rendered a residence in the colony one long series of alarms, suffering, and loss, with the daily imminent peril of a frightful death.

Mr. Meredith's experience of the habits and deeds of the aborigines extends over many years, and from the notes he has made for me, and our frequent conversations on the subject, I shall compile this chapter as nearly as possible in his own words. Many a time, contrary to our usual primitive country hours, has midnight found us still seated by our glowing hearth; I intent on hearing, and he relating the horrors, and terrors, and hair-breadth escapes of his younger days in the colony, when every bush within spear-throw of the house was a source of danger, and to stir beyond the door-sill unarmed was nothing short of *felo de se*. The plain relation of easily-proved matters of fact may perhaps tend to dissipate erroneous ideas as to the original enmity between the settlers and the aborigines, who for some years after the colonization of the island lived peaceably together, the natives visiting the houses and stations of the colonists in the same amicable manner as the blacks in New South Wales do now—coming and going as it pleased them—"camping" near to the

homes of the white people, with the free consent of the latter—receiving presents of food and other things, and not manifesting any jealous or angry feelings.

In considering this subject it should also be borne in mind who and what the early "settlers" were. They were neither pirates nor robbers, as were many of the early dwellers in and usurpers of new countries in days of yore; but British farmers and country gentlemen, not usually considered a desperately ferocious and blood-thirsty class, nor by any means disposed to commence hostilities against quiet unoffending people, such as the Tasmanian aborigines originally appeared; but purposing to till their ground and feed their sheep without injury or molestation to the natives, both parties being at that time so few in number, that the quantity of land occupied by the English, and partially thinned of the wild animals useful to the blacks, was comparatively speaking so small, as not to be felt by them as a deprivation, even had they not gained rather than lost by the change, in the food given them by the settlers. No murderous propensities displayed themselves until the arrival amongst them of a notable leader in crime and

cruelty, under whose guidance they committed their first open murder; and ever after they seemed to hunger and thirst after the lives of the colonists, whom they persecuted and killed with relentless and unquenchable ferocity, as the few instances I shall cite, out of many more that I could enumerate, will sufficiently prove. The following passages I quote either from Mr. Meredith's own notes, written at my request, or from my own transcriptions of his narratives as related to me.

"Considerable error prevails with respect to the cause of the hostility between the aborigines of this island and the white population, the general impression being that it arose in consequence of unprovoked acts of aggression and violence on the part of the whites, than which nothing can be further from the truth. The deadly enmity exhibited by the natives, through a series of years, towards the colonists and their servants was, in the first instance, unprovoked by the white population. I remember distinctly the first act of violence of that long and fearful tragedy—it was perpetrated by the natives, under the direction of 'Mosquito,' a native of Sydney, who had been tried there for the cruel murder of a white woman. By an act of

mistaken humanity on the part of the Sydney Government, Mosquito was reprieved from the gallows, and sent to this island, where he was set at liberty, and suffered to roam about unmolested. At first the natives here showed some jealousy towards him, but they ultimately became friendly, and gave him a gin, or wife, named 'Gooseberry.' Mosquito generally divided his time between them and the white people, roaming the bush with them in the summer, and living during the winter in Hobarton, usually called 'the camp,' in those days. Constant friendly intercourse took place between the two races until November, 1823, when the Oyster Bay tribe, having Mosquito at their head, committed a cool and unprovoked murder at the stock station of Mr. Sylas Gatehouse, at Grindstone Bay, on the east coast.

"Three men were at the station at the time, John Radford, and Mormer (a native of Otaheite), Mr. Gatehouse's servants, and Holyoake, a servant of my father's, who had been for some time in the colonial hospital in Hobarton, and, being pronounced convalescent, was on his way to his master's house; but having travelled about sixty

miles, and being still in a weak state of health, he was staying at this hut a few days to rest, being still thirty miles from home. A short time ago, whilst on my way to town, I passed the night at the public-house which is kept by Radford, at Little Swan Port. I then took down from his lips the following account of the whole affair:—

"'In November, 1823, I was in charge of stock for Mr. Gatehouse. One Thursday morning a party of blacks came to the hut, with Mosquito as chief. He brought me a tin pot from a deserted hut in my charge, as he said, *lest any of the black fellows should steal it.* They encamped at Grindstone Bay, and remained quiet until the Saturday after. In the mean time, Mosquito came into our hut, and got Holyoake to shave him. The tribe consisted of about seventy-five, and until Saturday morning they all employed themselves as usual, in hunting, fishing, &c. On Saturday morning they were having a corrobbory, dancing and singing. Holyoake, Mormer, and I went to the sheep-yards to part some sheep; whilst there, Mosquito called to Mormer to join him on the opposite side of the creek, and Mormer went over to him. When we were thus divided, the natives

that were on the same side of the creek as we were picked up their spears*, and moved towards the hut; those on the other side doing the same. During this movement, Holyoake and myself stood between the natives and the hut, to which we hastened, and arrived first, when, missing our guns, I called to Mormer to ask if he had removed the guns, as they were not there. He said "No," and hurried towards the hut, being then about fifty yards from it, the natives following him. These movements brought us all together at the hut, on one side of which was a deep creek; on another side was a brush fence; and on the third stood the natives, with a space of ten yards left clear, through which was our only chance of escape, as it was now plain to us that they meant mischief, and were trying to close in the open space. We had some valuable kangaroo dogs, and seeing Mosquito loosing them, I called out to him, "Don't take our dogs away!" His reply was, "I shall do as I like, now." We all then made a run; as I was passing

* The aborigines, when they wished to appear unarmed, had a habit of walking without any weapon in their hands, but very adroitly trailing their spears, which they held fast by their toes, along the ground after them, to be picked up at any moment they were required.

the corner of the fence, Black Jack speared me in the side. After the start I never saw Mormer again; he must have been killed at once. I continued running for seven or eight hundred yards, when I stopped to pull my boots off; I then saw Holyoake within fifty yards of me: he called to me to "pull a spear out of him." I returned and pulled out the spear, but whilst doing so, received another in my thigh, which I pulled out, and we ran together; I often waiting for Holyoake. We ran thus for some six hundred yards, when the blacks overtook Holyoake, and some passed him, running after me. The last I saw of Holyoake, he was standing throwing sticks and stones to try to keep the natives off. Seeing I could be of no service to him, I used my speed to save my own life, and succeeded in escaping. It was the first time I ever knew of an encounter between the blacks and whites, and I had been living amongst them then for three years. I believe their sole motive for the attack was the plunder of the hut. A man named John Kemp had been killed at Grindstone Bay previously to our occupying the station, which was in 1821. This man lived by himself, in charge of the provisions and stores of a sealing party,

who, on their return, found him dead, with spear-wounds in his body, and the stores all stolen.'

"Radford was chased about three miles by the natives, and made his way to another stock-station at Prosser's Plains, distant about twenty-five miles from the scene of the murder. Thence the intelligence was conveyed to Mr. Gatehouse, who lived at Pittwater, and he at once proceeded with a body of armed men in chase of the natives, to avenge the murder of his servant.

"The natives in the mean time moved on towards the north, and reached my father's residence, where, as the late murder was unknown, their appearance created no alarm. Mosquito, who spoke tolerable English, came to our house and said he understood the governor had given Mr. Meredith the land thereabouts, and requested permission to encamp on it, promising that neither he nor any of his tribe would frighten the cattle or commit any damage. Permission was given, and the tribe remained encamped within two hundred yards of my father's house for six or seven days, when they departed, and went about two miles farther, to the house of Mr. Talbot, who then lived at Oyster Bay, where the like favour was sought by Mosquito,

and permission to encamp was given by Mr. Talbot's overseer.

" On the same evening, Mr. Gatehouse and his armed party arrived in pursuit, but so eager was he to take vengeance for the death of his servant, that he gave orders to ' fire ' before he was within gun-shot of the blacks, and although all the guns were loaded with buck-shot, not a single native was killed, nor do I believe one was wounded. On the first discharge of the guns, the natives plunged into a lagoon, on the banks of which they were encamped, and by diving and swimming alternately, reached the opposite bank, and escaped, with only the loss of their weapons (consisting of spears and waddies) and the chief of their dogs. After this the tribe separated into two parties, one of which attacked Mosquito and wounded him severely, after which he came alone to the house of a settler near us; and, although the murder was then well known, he was suffered to go away unmolested.

" I have been somewhat minute in the detail of this transaction, because it was in fact the commencement and the cause of that deadly feud that ever after existed between the natives and the

white people on this side of the island; the former murdering numbers of the latter, both old and young, male and female, with indiscriminate fury, and, owing to their extreme cunning, activity, and stealthy cat-like nature, retaliation was all but impossible. I know of only *one* instance, in which a native lost his life by the hands of a white man; the occasion was this:—my father had lost three horses, and two men were dispatched to look for them. During their search, they fell in with a tribe of natives, who instantly gave chase; one of our servants was armed with a pistol, and the other with a gun. The natives ran in two lines, one on either side of the men, with the view of surrounding them, and when parallel with them, began throwing their spears. The man who had the pistol then cocked it, and pulled the trigger, but it missed fire; on this the natives yelled, and ran with increased energy, calling to each other to close the lines, and surround their victims; at this juncture the man who had the gun fired at the foremost native, and shot him dead; the others ran to their fallen companion, and our men escaped, being then within 600 yards of a farm-house, where they were reinforced by the farmer's sons,

and returned to the place where the black was shot. The other natives had dragged his body into a hollow tree, and covered it with dead wood, but none of them were then to be seen. To complete my story, I should add, that the horses were all found, but two of them were dead, one having thirteen spears in its body, and the other only one; but that one had penetrated the heart.

"I do not dwell on the above solitary instance of the death of a native by the hands of white men, with the view of inducing any one to believe that the colonists would not have retaliated more frequently if they could. The natives, under the guidance of Mosquito, commenced and carried on what they intended should prove a war of extermination, both of man and beast. They spared neither age nor sex; the aged woman and the helpless child alike fell victims to their ferocity; and the feelings of the whites towards them in consequence may easily be imagined. For a space of some months, during which time I noted down their proceedings, the number of murders of white people which came to my knowledge *averaged eight a week;* and many doubtless occurred which I never heard of.

"In several instances, the lives of white people were saved by the native women, who would often steal away from the tribe, and give notice of an intended attack. On one occasion one of our boat's crews had landed for the night on the shore of Great Swan Port, made their preparations for supper, and lighted a fire, when two native women came stealthily to them, warning them to hurry away, as the tribe was hidden behind the nearest bank, only waiting till the moon rose to make a descent upon them. Accordingly, the men hastily gathered up their paraphernalia, and decamped to their boat, but had scarcely pushed out into deep water before they saw the enemy come stealing down, one black figure after another gliding past their fire, evidently with the intention of surrounding them.

"The disappearance of all the young children among the natives compels us to the inference that they were destroyed; doubtless on account of the difficulty of conveying them about in the rapid flights from place to place which the blacks now practised in the perpetration of their murders. No white people ever found or killed any children that I am aware of, and few after this time were seen

with the tribes; the dreadful conclusion seems therefore unavoidable.

"Colonel, now Sir George, Arthur, arrived here as lieutenant-governor in 1824, shortly after the first murders, and my father immediately proposed to him plans for the conciliation and temporary coercion of the natives, warning him that unless some effectual means were at once adopted, the murderous habits of the latter would for a time be fearfully destructive to the colonists, and eventually cause their own extermination. The advice was disregarded, but the result verified its wisdom.

"It will suffice to mention here two or three from among the many fatal outrages committed by the blacks in our immediate neighbourhood. After the murder at Grindstone Bay, the natives remained quiet for some months, and people had begun to recover from their suspicions and dread of them, when they murdered another of our servants. Two of my father's stock-keepers, Robert Gay and David Raynor, lived together in a hut near the head of Moulting Bay*, in Swan Port, Gay being

* Moulting Bay, so named from the number of black swans which formerly frequented it in the *moulting* season, is amusingly enough marked on some modern maps as "*Port Moultan.*"

in charge of the place. One morning, in the winter of 1824, Raynor rode out after cattle, purposing to remain out all night, but from some cause he changed his plans, and returned home in the evening. On approaching the hut, he was surprised that the dogs did not come out barking as usual, and, thinking that his mate had very imprudently left home and gone hunting in his absence, rode up to the door somewhat angrily, when he found some kangaroo-skins, which were always kept inside, scattered about. On entering, he found the hut in great disorder, and the stores of food, &c., all gone. Then, looking round, he saw numbers of prints of naked feet, showing that many persons, male and female, had been trampling about, and being by this time convinced that the natives had been there, he grew alarmed, and rode off again to the next station, reporting the circumstance. This was near the farm of Mr. John Amos, who, with a party of armed men, went with Raynor to his hut the following morning. Poor Gay's foot-prints were soon distinguished, as he had worn boots, whilst the blacks' feet (traces of which there were many, evidently in pursuit of him) were naked. About

four hundred yards from the hut was a creek, in which the body of Gay was found, covered over with sticks; on being drawn out, many spear-wounds were discovered, and one spear remained in one of the feet, having been driven through his thick boot-sole into the foot; but for this one spear he might probably have escaped, being a very swift runner, and this fatal weapon must have struck him when flying at full speed from his murderers. All his finger-joints were broken, and the body brutally mutilated, according to the usual custom of the blacks, when not hurried or disturbed in their deeds of horror. Everything, of any value, that the hut had contained was stolen—stores, dogs, all were gone, and not a native was to be seen or heard of in the neighbourhood.

"This same David Raynor had another narrow escape some years after. He was coming home on horseback, driving wild cattle near the Apsley River, and not a native was in sight, when two spears, thrown at him, gave the first intimation of their vicinity; one struck into the thick padding of the saddle behind his leg, and the other carried off the red woollen sailor's cap he wore, and pinned it

to the side of a bullock in the herd at some distance beyond. Raynor then rode for his life, and the terrified cattle flew in all directions; but some short time after the bullock, which he had described as being speared, was found with a deep spear-wound in the side, then nearly healed.

"Within a fortnight from the time of Gay's murder, the same tribe went to my father's whaling-station at the mouth of Swan Port; they hailed the boats, and the men took them in, and, thinking they would gain some reward for capturing the murderous savages, pulled across the bay homewards, and then kept the native party, consisting of six men and four or five women, for two or three days, intending to send them by a vessel to the governor; but, whilst arrangements were being made for conveying them safely and unharmed on board, they effected an escape—some ran one way, some another, and pursuit was vain; but one of the women was slightly hurt in the confusion, and rushed into the sea, where she swam and dived for some time, before she could be induced to come ashore. Her wound was carefully dressed by a surgeon who chanced to have arrived, and considerable anxiety was entertained lest it should

prove worse than it then seemed; a bed was made up for her in a warm hut, and she was finally left for the night. Early in the morning the hut was visited, to see how the patient fared; but, though the door had been closed and fastened, the chimney had not, and up it the dark lady had gone.

"John Raynor, another of three brothers, all in my father's service, was one morning out hunting, and, about nine o'clock, sat busily skinning a kangaroo which his dogs had just caught, when suddenly the animals yelled, as they always did whenever they saw or scented the blacks, and, on looking round, he perceived some of them near him. He jumped up and ran, but instantly received two spears, one in his breast, which he pulled out readily, and another in his back, which he wrenched at, and broke off short. He still ran as fast as he could, until, coming to a large log, he tripped, and fell over it in such a manner as to conceal him, for he knew nothing more, until, coming to himself at night, he by degrees recalled the circumstances, and with some difficulty made his way home. He remained ill for some time from the wounds he had received, but ultimately recovered, and went to Hobarton. On his return

thence, when within four miles of Grindstone Bay (the scene of the first murder), he was passing through a thick close scrub of wattle-trees, when a number of the natives, who were hidden among them, rushed out and knocked him down, completely stunning him with blows from their waddies.

"Stock-keepers were then living at the Grindstone Bay station, and, three days after the attack upon Raynor, these men saw something approaching their hut, which at last they discerned to be a man, but, from his reeling staggering gait, they believed him to be drunk. He advanced slowly along the path, sometimes creeping on all fours, and sometimes walking, with a rolling unsteady pace. With great effort and difficulty he climbed over the fence near the hut, and then they found it was poor Raynor, cruelly maimed and wounded, with one eye knocked out, and the other quite blind, his frightful sores all festering, and alive with maggots! The poor fellow had awakened from his long stupor, and, on recovering his recollection, had crawled along the path, which was fortunately tolerably well beaten; and so, after unimaginable agony and toil, he had contrived to reach the hut. Every

kind attention was paid to him, and he was afterwards carefully conveyed to the Hobarton Hospital, but he died there.

"About the year 1827 the natives made a most determined attack upon the cottage-home of a settler at Great Swan Port, named Buxton, who was himself absent at the time; but his wife, four daughters, and two sons (one aged fifteen, the other a child), were at home, the only other inmates being a servant man, and a person travelling on the east coast, who was resting on his journey. The cottage was, like those usually inhabited by the early settlers, built of turf, with a thatched roof. Early in the morning of a summer's day, the family was alarmed by the peculiar yelling of the dogs, denoting the near approach of the natives. On looking out, the place was discovered to be wholly surrounded by a large body of them, and as, unhappily, they were not then accustomed to approach the white people with any but hostile purposes, their appearance produced no small amount of terror and dismay, especially as, from some inadvertence or neglect, the besieged family had no means of defence, being wholly deficient either of arms or ammunition (I forget

which). Still, the natives durst not rush into the hut, and the inmates remained prisoners within from the early morning until four in the afternoon, when the blacks, being resolved to dislodge them by some means, set fire to a brush fence which ran close beside the hut, and could not fail, if it continued burning, to ignite the thatch. As the fire approached, some of the party were obliged to go out and extinguish it, when the traveller received a spear in his back, and the servant one in his stomach, from the wound of which he died. This success greatly emboldened the blacks, who immediately came nearer, and got into the trees close to the cottage, whence they began throwing fire-sticks on to the thatch, and set fire to it; but Mr. Buxton's eldest son succeeded in putting it out, and regained the hut without being wounded. A party of the natives below now made a fire on the ground, and carefully burned the ends of spears, so as to carry fire with certainty, and these they began to hand up to the others in the trees. The wretched group in the cottage now believed themselves inevitably doomed; death in its most horrible shape seemed awaiting them at a few seconds' distance, and all hope of escape

had departed, for the two dwellings nearest to them, whence alone they could expect succour, were severally fifteen and twenty-seven miles off. Yet was a rescue at hand, even at the doors! A party of twelve or fourteen soldiers, in search of bushrangers, then very numerous, came up at this fearful juncture; and the instant they were seen, the whole besieging army of natives *vanished* —rapidly and silently as the shadows of a hideous dream, and in a few seconds not one was to be found near the place. The traveller who had been speared was a sufferer for some time, but he eventually recovered.

"Some time after this event, a terrible tragedy was perpetrated at Jericho, where my father had a quantity of cattle in the care of a stock-keeper named Gough, who lived in a hut with his wife and his two little girls; and a mile distant from him, an old couple named Mortimer occupied another small hut. One morning about eleven o'clock, Gough and his servant, being at home, saw old "Mother Mortimer" coming towards them as fast as she could run, and calling out to beg and beseech them to go quickly to her hut, for that the blacks had set it on fire, and she wanted Gough to

save some of her little property, her husband being away from home. Gough and the man took their guns and ran off on their charitable errand, whilst the old woman stayed with Mrs. Gough. They found Mortimer's hut totally burned to the ground, and everything destroyed, but not a single native was visible. Gough immediately feared that they had gone, or certainly would go, to his own home, and ran back again at the top of his speed; but too late to save his unhappy family from the brutal blacks. The first object that met his sight was the body of his young wife, pierced with many spears, and her brains knocked out. A little beyond lay the old woman Mortimer, her head cloven in two with an axe. Near the hut he found his eldest girl, her head beaten to pieces; and near her the youngest, stunned with blows on the head, and otherwise dreadfully hurt, but still alive and moaning. As usual, the natives had vanished.

"The poor little girl who recovered said that her father was only just out of sight when the natives came, proving the truth of Gough's suspicions that the attack on Mortimer's hut was a mere ruse to secure his absence from his own, which they could then plunder at their ease, and probably the

main body was concealed round his hut, only awaiting his departure to begin the attack. The terrified women had shut themselves and the children in the hut, and the blacks threw spears at them through the windows (the panes of glass in which were pierced with round holes, as if balls had been fired through them). The natives then came down the chimney, and old Nancy Mortimer struck at their legs with the axe, whilst Mrs. Gough tried to escape by the door, but they were then directly murdered. The hut was stripped of all the stores.

"Not far from this last place, in the pretty valley near the present 'London Inn,' a small farmer named Hooper, with his wife and either seven or eight young children, lived in a hut placed between two rocky hills, near a stream of fresh water. One day, some persons went to see Hooper, and were surprised at not finding him or any of the children about, or at work as usual, and proceeded towards the cottage, where, lying all round, frightfully mangled and full of spears, were the dead bodies of Hooper, his wife, and *all* their children. As usual with the savages, when not disturbed in their work of fiendish butchery, they had cruelly muti-

lated their helpless victims, hammered their bones in pieces, broken their fingers, &c., &c.

"A black woman some time after told the whole of their plans and schemes to achieve this terrible murder; she said that a party of them had for three days kept watch unseen on one of the rocky hills close to the cottage, intending to wait there until Hooper went out to work without his gun, which he usually carried, as was the general and necessary custom in those days of terror. One unhappy day he *did* go out without it, and instantly the descent was made and the massacre effected with the terrible success they anticipated.

"At a hut in St. Paul's Plains six or eight men were living together, being shepherds and other servants of a neighbouring settler; one morning they found their hut surrounded by forty or fifty natives. The men had several guns, but only a few rounds of ammunition; still, with only common presence of mind and courage, they would have been in no immediate danger; but, in the extremity of their terror, they lost all prudence, and began firing whilst the blacks were still beyond the range of the guns, so that before they could do any execution their powder was all spent. Even then, had they

remained in the hut, the natives could not have known their want of powder, and would probably have kept off; but, panic-stricken at the bare idea of the natives—so intensely had their atrocities excited the terror of the white people—the frightened men agreed to 'make a run for it,' and putting this hopeless expedient into practice, they all started from the hut together. The blacks, soon perceiving that they made no attempt to shoot, instantly closed round and knocked them down, and killed them all except one, who escaped into the tier of mountains near the station, running so far that he totally lost himself, and could not find his way back for three days. Within two hours after the murder I passed the station, walking slowly, and leading my horse, which had fallen lame; and as I went by at a short distance, I wondered why none of the men usually there were then to be seen about. I left my lame horse at the farm of a settler near, and walked on homewards. The following day I came upon the freshly-deserted camp-place of the tribe, some miles nearer to Swan Port, in which direction they, like myself, were hastening; but fortunately we did not meet. A dray was sent to the St. Paul's station the day after the murder,

with provisions and stores, when the dead bodies were discovered."

But enough of these harrowing details! Surely I need transcribe no more; nor would I have particularised even these, but in the hope of making known something of the real state of affairs as formerly existing between the aborigines and the colonists, which is so greatly misunderstood in England; where, as I well know, the white people are most erroneously believed to have been the aggressors. I verily begin to think there is some peculiarity in the atmosphere around Van Diemen's Land, which is adverse to the transmission of truth, for somehow or other all accounts carried home partake of the same distorted or wholly imaginative character. Nor can I marvel at wrong impressions concerning the treatment of the blacks being received in England, when even in the colony some persons of education and supposed common sense were, some years ago, actually cheated or quizzed into the belief that the settlers made a regular practice of catching the natives, and boiling them down to feed pigs! I shall close this most unpleasant chapter with Mr. Meredith's brief account of the final capture of the blacks.

"The outrages committed by the natives continued without any attempt on the part of the Government to suppress them, *beyond the formal publication, in the Government Gazette, of a proclamation, commanding the natives not to pass from the west to the east of a certain imaginary line drawn through the island in a north and south direction!* The use of such a medium as a printed proclamation in a Gazette to address a horde of savages, who could not speak the English language, far less read it, would not have occurred to any governor less gifted with sagacity than Col. Arthur; and with that notable experiment he contented himself until the year 1829, when the whole male population of the colony, capable of bearing arms, was called out for the purpose of driving the natives on to Tasman's Peninsula. Many, whose better sense informed them of the impossibility of such a scheme succeeding, joined in the 'Black War,' as it was called, from the fear of being deprived of their assigned servants, and cut off from all chance of receiving additional grants of land; such being the manner in which Lieut.-Governor Colonel Arthur, now Sir George Arthur, exhibited his displeasure towards those settlers who differed

with him as to the policy of his local acts. As was foretold from its commencement, the 'Black war' proved an utter failure, and cost the colony 27,000*l.*! Except in the transfer of large sums of money to the contractors favoured by Government, matters remained as before the expedition was undertaken, until a person named Robinson, a bricklayer by trade, but an active and intelligent man, undertook and performed the singular service of bringing every aboriginal man, woman, and child, quietly, peaceably, and willingly into Hobarton, whence they were shipped to Flinder's Island, which is between forty and fifty miles in length, twelve to eighteen in width, and abounding with the smaller species of kangaroo, &c.; the coasts are plentifully supplied with fish, and in addition to this abundance of their natural food, the natives were provided at the expense of the colony with dwellings, ample rations of flour and meat, bedding, clothes, garden implements, seeds, fishing-tackle, and all things which could be necessary for their present or improved condition; besides medical attendance, and the means of careful and judicious instruction in all things fitting or possible for them to learn.

"From the time of Mr. Robinson's extraordinary

capture, or rather persuasion of the natives to follow him, a complete change took place in the island; the remote stock stations were again resorted to, and guns were no longer carried between the handles of the plough. The means of persuasion employed by Mr. Robinson to induce the natives to submit to his guidance have ever been a mystery to me. He went into the bush unarmed, and, accompanied by an aboriginal woman, his sole companion, met the different tribes, and used such arguments with them as sufficed at length to achieve his object, after having occupied many months in its pursuit. He received some reward from the local Government, although not nearly adequate to the merits of his service. He alone, unassisted in any way, accomplished what Colonel Arthur, with the aid of the military, and all the male population of the island, and an expenditure of 27,000*l.*, had failed to do. The debt of gratitude the colony owes to Mr. Robinson can never be overpaid; by his capture of the natives, he saved the lives of thousands of defenceless persons, and was the means of restoring that prosperity to the colony which the accumulating number of murders was fast undermining."

SPRING VALE COTTAGE.

CHAPTER XIII.

Joyful Removal to Spring Vale.—Improvements.—Clearing and Burning.—Great Flood.—The Half-drowned Man.—Two to be Extricated.—The Rescue.—The "Big Pool."—The Sweet Bay.—Black Cockatoos.—Pied Magpies.—Black Magpies.

By the end of August, 1842, our cottage had advanced so far towards completion, that we could live in it; and, without waiting for anything further, we began the welcome business of removal thither. Never, perhaps, did the unpleasant process of changing one's house appear so delightful. The very carts and drays as they started off, loaded with

the heterogeneous contents of our abode, had, in my eyes, quite a cheerful and jaunty air, as they went nodding along; and the promiscuous arrangement of chair and table legs looked as if scarcely restrained from a dance on the spot. My piano, carefully replaced in its English case, and laid upon a dray well padded with bags full of straw, and drawn by six oxen, moved away with a grave and solemn demeanour, as if conscious how important a part it played in the procession, and would probably be much scandalized at the riotous and unmusical conduct of certain small pigs, who, with their portly maternal parent, occupied another vehicle in the train.

On the following morning, after breakfast, our horse-cart came to the door, and received its precious freight, consisting of the children, the mamma, the nurse, and the cat, the latter safely tied up in a bag, greatly to dear little George's amusement and mystification. Portfolios, desks, workboxes, books, toys, and such "small deer," completed the load, and so we arrived at last at our new home. How busy everybody immediately became, what sounds of brooms and scrubbing-brushes, of mops and pails; what hammering and unpacking went noisily

on, may well be imagined; but so merrily and rapidly went on the work, that even on the first night we were tolerably snug, and in another day or two were truly "at home."

Our walls were still damp, from their own great thickness, and the fresh plaster, one coat only of which we waited to have put on before removing, purposing to finish the interior in summer. Certainly the scores and crossings of the plasterer's trowel were not ornamental, and the dark colour of the walls might seem somewhat gloomy; but as soon as they dried sufficiently, I had a remedy at hand for all their unsightliness; I hung up the old pictures once again, and heartily welcomed them to, as I then believed, their last Australian home.

Too many useful and necessary things had hitherto demanded attention and labour, to allow of any merely ornamental work being done; and I dare say any one else (especially if unaccustomed to the transformations of a new country), who looked at our lonely dwelling, and the scrubby thickets and dead wood all around it, and the high heavy log-fence which then stood just in front, would bless himself that it was not his fate to inhabit such a wilderness; but to us—seeing it as we

did through the decorative medium of our own plans and projects—all was bright and hopeful. In looking *at* the house, we knew exactly where the veranda would "come in," and where the climbing roses, and vines, and clematis, would be trained over it; and when we surveyed the view from the windows, the coarse reality of scrub and log-fence was nicely softened by the "mind's eye" view of the green sloping lawn, and neat well-laid out garden beyond, which formed part of our arrangements, and which was already well stocked with choice fruit-trees from the Cambria orchard.

The work of clearing away the scrubby trees and wood in front furnished Mr. Meredith with occupation for many an afternoon, and, with strong gloves on, I enjoyed lending a helping hand to the task; whilst even little George was delighted to carry sticks to the heaps, and earn scratched knees and torn pinafores in the service. Our piles of wood and leaves made grand bonfires at night, and the streams of bright flames and sparks, rising amidst the masses of dark honeysuckle trees, illuminated the whole scene with a wild and most picturesque glare of light.

We had not been located at Spring Vale more

than a fortnight or three weeks, when an unusually heavy fall of rain set in, and continued for some days. The rivers on either side of us rose very rapidly, as they both descend from steep mountains, whose narrow rocky gorges pour down an enormous accumulation of water. Our low lands were soon entirely flooded, forming a great lake, and the chief of the cattle and sheep were with difficulty saved, and driven to the dry ground; but some calves and sheep were drowned, despite the utmost care, as the rivers, breaking forth at different points, formed temporary islands, where the poor frightened creatures retreated for safety, until swept away by the increasing and rapid overflow of the water.

About two o' clock on the first day of the flood, we heard a great noise of "Coo-ee-ring," in the direction of the ford over the Swan River, and our servants, on going down, found that a man, in attempting to cross on horseback, had been so frightened by the breadth and roaring of the water, that he had slipped off the horse, and, with some difficulty, scrambled into a tree, then in the middle of the stream. Mr. Meredith hurried down to see what could be done for him, and at this time he might, with common presence of mind and the

assistance offered him, have walked on shore, as, although broad and rapid, the water was not yet deep; but nothing could induce him to make the attempt, although he entreated that the horse, which had safely swam out, might be "turned in again towards him;" for what purpose, it were difficult to say, as when he was on its back before he could not keep his seat. The river was now rising and spreading with terrific rapidity; each moment the chances of escape grew less, and the cowardly fellow's situation more dreadful. All aid was soon impracticable, as the huge masses of timber that came rushing along, and the hidden boughs and stakes in the scrub that now formed part of the river's bed, would have instantly disabled the stoutest swimmer, and no boat could be obtained.

The rain still poured down in torrents, with a cold southerly* wind, and the dim gray twilight fast darkened into night, over as dreary a scene as can well be imagined. The tree in which the unfortunate man had taken refuge was, just at nightfall, swept away by the torrent; and, half-drowned for the second time, he luckily contrived to lay

* The cold rain is of course from the south in this hemisphere, although it still seems strange, even to me, to speak of it as such.

hold of another tree, as he was washed along, which, although slender, and shaking under him with the force of the water, served him better, having a forked branch in it, on which he could rest one foot at a time; and so the poor wretch clung to it, wet to the skin, and nearly frozen in the cold night wind. Our servants, who would willingly have risked their own lives for his had there been a chance of success, made up a fire against a great gum-tree on the nearest bank, and three or four of them determined to remain there the whole night to keep up the fire, and shout to him, "to cheer him up a bit," as they kindly said; and another party did the same on the other side the river.

It was late before we could think of going comfortably to bed, whilst a fellow-creature remained near us in such a wretched and awful condition; for it seemed scarcely possible that he could "hold on" till morning. And at intervals, all through the dreary night, amidst the gusts of wind, the pelting rain, and the deep loud roaring of the flood, which now encompassed our little hill on three sides, I could hear the shouts of our people, as they hailed the poor wretch, both to comfort him, and to assure themselves by his replies that he had not dropped

into the river. At length morning came, and showed him still clinging to the tree, in the midst of the vast, broad, turbulent, rushing torrent. The man's master, and several other settlers from the neighbourhood, came to see what could be done, but all shrunk from the idea of perilling their own lives in so hopeless a risk. Mr. Meredith, who had also been down to the river, had returned to the house, and we were at breakfast, when a hasty footstep came along the hall, then a loud sob was heard, and the nursemaid burst into the room, crying bitterly.

"If you please, sir——"

"Well! what's the matter?"

"Oh, sir! if you please, sir, *Bill's up a tree too!*" And on inquiry, we found that one of our good old servants had foolishly suffered himself to be flattered and persuaded that "he was the man to fetch the poor fellow out, if any man could," and had, with thorough kindness, but most insane folly, attempted to swim out to him: the eddying current had swept him away, dashed him against some hidden logs so as to hurt him severely, and left him barely strength to grasp a tree a little nearer our bank than the other, and clamber into it; so that now there were two, instead of one, to be extricated.

Devices innumerable were discussed and dismissed in turn; the day wore away, and our poor fellow said he could not "hold on" much longer. Long lines had been prepared, but none could be thrown far enough to reach the trees; and after gathering together and sending down every cord and twine and fishing-line in the house, for another trial, I could not rest at home, for I knew that Mr. Meredith would not allow a faithful old servant to perish in the cause of humanity, even if he risked his own life to save him. The rain had abated, and I ran down to a bank on the water's edge, whence I could see both the unfortunates clinging to their trees, their clothes saturated with wet, and their frightful position more than realizing my belief of its horrors. The river roared and boiled along beneath them, carrying down with it huge trees, whole lines of fencing, blocks of wood, and branches of all sizes, which, as they dashed against the slender trees, made them shake as though they were giving way too.

At last a man on the opposite bank, after innumerable failures, succeeded in shooting from a gun a stick, to which a long fine line was attached, and to the end of this a strong rope. After many

trials, the stick fell in the tree where the first man was hanging, and he hauled in the twine until he caught the rope, which he tied round his body, and, after some hesitation, obeyed the command to throw himself into the river. The people on the bank hauled away manfully at their end of the rope, but the current was so strong, that the man was carried down some distance, and kept so long under water, that I thought he must be drowned; but he re-appeared, and was dragged through a thick half-submerged scrub, safe to land, where the good people had prepared hot tea, and fire, and dry garments, and I soon lost sight of him among the bustling group that closed round him.

Mr. Meredith having now completed his plan for rescuing "Bill," took a tall pole, and, carrying with him a long line coiled up, waded off towards him, swimming being impracticable, from the quantities of submerged and driving logs and sticks; three of the men followed him, with similar poles to hold themselves up by against the current, whilst our friend Mr. Jukes, of the "Fly,"* took the command

* Who, in the narrative of his wanderings, has not condescended to immortalize our pleasant island of Tasmania, and tells me that no one will read what any one may write about it. *I* hope to find his prophecy not *quite* true.

of the coil of rope, more in-shore. Having gained a great heap of wreck collected round a tree some distance from the bank, Mr. Meredith climbed into this tree, and from it managed to throw the line on to the tree where our servant was, who hauled it in, till he got hold of the rope, which he tied round him, and then dropped into the water. He was soon drawn through the broad deep channel to the heap of wreck, and from thence the men held him up and guided him ashore. I waited no longer, but ran quickly home to prepare dry clothes, warm blankets, and the wherewithal to comfort the "inner man" of the dripping party, who soon followed me, thankful that our poor servitor's thoughtless expedition had not had a more serious result than the joking advice of his companions, "not to go a bird's nesting that way again."

Some days elapsed before the rivers retired sufficiently within their usual bounds, for persons to cross them safely. Another flood, but of less magnitude than this, occurred in the following November; but, beyond the annoyance such visitations always occasion, by cutting off communication and destroying fences, its consequences were not very important.

These rivers of ours, so terrible when swollen

with winter rains, on the melting of the mountain snows (snow being unknown in nearly all the lower parts of this delightful island), dwindle to mere brooks during the summer months, and are often wholly lost sight of, except in a few deep shady pools. One of these, in the Cygnet River, was called the "Big Pool," though, as in every river in almost every district, there are some half-dozen bearing the same not very definite or descriptive name. I proposed to distinguish this by some more characteristic one, such as Lake Cygnet, or the Dryad's Mirror. It is very deep, the banks appear nearly perpendicular, and the water has a deep blue colour as you gaze down into it, but is so clear and still, that the forest which encircles it may see each knotted and twisted gum-tree, and each tall and thickly-verdant lightwood and wattle, reflected as in a mirror; and indeed I can only account for the singular arching-over of the fine old trees, by the fancy that they had for ages so loved to bend down and gaze on themselves in the calm deep water, that they had at last grown into their present position.

The wild unspoiled beauty of the place made it a great favourite with us, and I rarely went there without seeing some new bird or insect, or finding

a shrub or flower which I did not know before. Several beautiful species of ferns grew here luxuriantly, in the dark moist nooks; and the trunks and twisting roots of the old trees were clad in mosses and lichens of various form, and infinitely varying colour.

That beautiful shrub, the "Sweet Bay" of the colonists (*Prostanthera lasianthos*), grew here to the height of fifteen or even twenty feet, with its handsome sprays and clusters of white purple-pencilled flowers, thrown into fine relief and contrast by the deep rich green of the elegant foliage; and the starry clematis wove its bower of emerald and silver among the branches, in many a quiet shadowy nook, where the noon-day sun might only find tiny loopholes in the high leafy screen above, to peer down into our sylvan haunts.

The beautiful black cockatoos seemed to share in our admiration of this spot, for we often found a large party of them in the tall trees near the pool, and sometimes in the dead boughs of fallen ones which formed a sort of barrier at either end of it, and seemed to furnish the cockatoos with good store of grubs and insects, to judge by the pleasant and congratulatory tone of their conversation. These

are like the black cockatoos of New South Wales, except that the top-knots and tails of the latter are trimmed with crimson, whilst my more intimate and familiar friends of Spring Vale had their jetty garb more delicately varied by a pale and lovely shade of canary-yellow, or rather pure primrose colour. Their cry is much more pleasing than that of the white cockatoo, and instead of being, like that bird, a great pest to the farmer, they are quite harmless, never molesting the richest crops of grain, but only visiting old dead or dying trees, and picking out of them the large white grubs, which form their chief food. These grubs are often three or four inches long, and proportionably thick; perfectly white, smooth, and rather glossy; more like models of grubs in white wax, than living things; the aborigines eat them greedily, and I have heard that some English people do so, and say they taste like nuts or almonds! They change to gigantic moths, of most exquisite plumage, their principal colours being those of the owl and hawk tribe, among birds, but charmingly varied and shaded; the *feathers* are of extraordinary length, so that the insect's legs and head have the appearance of being clothed in long rich fur garments, and

their wings, some of which have beautiful large pink eyes or spots in them, look as if Titania's busy sprites might comb and dress them like hair.

The cockatoos search for these dainty morsels with great avidity; the strength of their beaks is enormous; I have often watched them at work in a tree, tearing away first the bark in great strips, and then large pieces of the wood; and on going afterwards to examine the chips they have left, have truly marvelled at their dexterity and perseverance, for the grub is often deep in the wood, and a great thickness must be torn away before it can be dislodged. They are right merry craftsmen, too, and call out cheerfully and kindly to one another, as they ply their work, discoursing, doubtless, on the quality and obstinate resistance of their prize. They are usually seen in parties of from five to ten or fifteen, and always give me the idea of most friendly, clever, good-humoured birds; and, accordingly, we took them under our especial protection, never suffering them to be molested near us, so that they grew comparatively tame, and would sit pecking in trees quite close to the house, and let us approach them tolerably near, to observe their polite bowings and curtseyings, as they gravely moved about, with

their elegant golden crests alternately raised or depressed; but if we still lessened what they deemed a prudent distance, the whole party took wing. The cockatoos appeared to roam about during the day to considerable distances, but we generally saw them flying home at night in the same direction. I have often wished to procure a young bird to rear tame, yet allowing it perfect liberty, but have never heard of any one who had found or seen a nest. One of our servants offered to procure me one very readily, but, on inquiring how he meant to achieve the capture, I found his notable expedient was to fire at one very near to him, and "wing it," which not being exactly the treatment I contemplated for my tame pet, I declined the proposal.

My conscience half reproaches me for suffering even the beautiful black cockatoos to take precedence, in this gossiping chronicle, of our yet more prized and beloved friends, the common magpies, the merriest, handsomest, most harmless and entertaining birds that can be conceived. As every one on our land was prohibited from destroying them, or, indeed, any birds, save parrots, hawks, and cows, we had generally a large assemblage near the house; and their sweet songs, warbled forth at in-

tervals during the whole day and night, reminded me pleasantly of the note of the English blackbird. Many of the full, rich, deep tones are exactly similar, although the magpie's song has less variety of cadence: still, it is, alone, an ample refutation of the assertion made by some unobservant person, and echoed by many thoughtless ones, that "the Australian birds have no song," than which nothing can be more untrue, for many of them have very sweet notes; and any one who would do as I have often done—sit quietly down in a woody retired spot, and, without noise or motion, listen to the countless voices warbling all around him, in every variety of tone and key, would soon become convinced that the Australian, or at all events the Tasmanian, birds, not only sing, but sing very pleasingly; and, of all the choir, the magpies take the highest rank.

They are very beautiful birds, too, with a good deal of the form and air of the English magpie, but with a shorter tail. The plumage, of the glossiest black and most brilliant silvery white, is elegantly contrasted and arranged, and their bright intelligent eyes, and graceful demeanour, seem to denote a degree of refinement rather above their neighbours. In the summer, and when the nights

are moonlight, at whatever hour I have chanced to awake, I have heard them carolling away as if it were just sunrise, and often, with a sleepy wonder, marvelled when, or if ever, they tucked their busy heads beneath their wings, and went to sleep like other birds.

Our servants used to complain that my handsome friends would persist in pecking the meat, when the oxen or sheep were freshly killed, and were hanging outside, and I have myself observed them examining it with most minute attention; but on two of them being shot for the offence, I was so much grieved, and gave such peremptory orders that so unwonted an outrage should never again be perpetrated, that they have peeped into our beef and mutton ever since with impunity.

Sad and melancholy creatures are the tame magpies so often seen here, cooped up in wretched cages made of an old tea-chest or soap-box, with a few bars on one side, and hung up against a hut, where they forget their own "wood-notes wild," and learn to swear, or to whistle "Jim Crow;" their dim, soiled, ragged feathers, and lack-lustre expression, scarcely suffering one to believe them of the same race as the bright merry wild magpies.

The black magpie has very much the aspect of a crow, being jet-black all over, saving only a small bar of white on the wings and tail; it is a far less agreeable guest than its pied namesake, being very destructive in corn-fields. Just as the blade is springing well up, these mischievous birds descend in flocks, and, with their long powerful bills, dig up and devour the rooted grain, so that they sometimes cause great loss to the farmer, and our firelocks had a full share of their unwelcome patronage. They have several notes or cries, but none are very musical. They usually associate in large parties, although their slovenly stick-nests are solitary. Some persons like these birds when cooked; but, after exhausting all my culinary skill upon them in roasts, stews, curries, and pies, I have finally given them up as not cookable, or rather as not relishable when cooked. Whether it be the *crowish* look they have which gives us unpleasant fancies about them, or that the flesh really possesses the flavour we attribute to it, I am not quite decided, but our prejudice against them is too strong to be overcome. No one would think of eating one of the other magpies, as they are known to devour meat, besides their usual food of worms, grubs, &c.

PORCUPINES (ECHIDNA).

CHAPTER XIV.

Garden-making.—Walks and Rides.—Native Raspberry.—Old Don and the Kangaroo.—Tasmanian Quadrupeds.—Forest Kangaroo. —Brush Kangaroo.—Joey and Beppo.—Wolloby.—Kangaroo-rat.—Bandicoot.—Porcupine.—Wombat.—Its Haunts.

DURING the summer and autumn of this year, (1842–3), we effected many of our purposed improvements: the veranda was built, the log-fence in the front was removed, and a more distant paling supplied its place sloping down the hill, so as to include some nice wattle-trees in our "lawn," so called; although I much question if its smoothly-shaven namesakes at home would own kindred with

the piece of long-bearded, wild, uneven grass and weeds, which we affectionately so designated. The cottage being placed on a rocky bank, the soil close around it was not adapted for a garden (our principal one was at the foot of the slope, in a rich flat), and my indispensable flower-borders were consequently formed with some labour. Many cart-loads of stones and rocks had to be carried away, and a quantity of rich earth and manure carted in: the borders were then laid out on a very simple plan, and edged with thyme, almost the only substitute here for the bright, clean, neat box-edging used in England. Roses of various kinds, geraniums, and a host of other good old flowers, were soon planted, and another pleasant source of interest and occupation opened to me. Of the latter I had, indeed, no lack, between the care of my household and our dear children; and besides these there were chickens, and ducks, and turkeys to rear; butter, cream, cheeses, and other country comforts to make; calves to pet; mushrooms to seek, and convert into ketchup (these being frequently very abundant and fine); and a whole catalogue of pleasant busy little idlenesses to indulge in, that carried one week after another with reproachful celerity.

Then our long rambling rides or walks often occupied the longest half of the day, especially if Master George were of the party, trotting along on foot, with occasional interludes of "pick-a-back," on papa's shoulders. Sometimes our corn-fields had to be visited, the wheat and oats growing most luxuriantly. Sometimes we went to look at the turnips, wherein lay our hopes of fat beef for winter; or to see the potatoes, which we were told were certain not to succeed, many farmers here having ceased to grow them, the summer frosts being destructive; ours, however, promised well, and we gladly anticipated the luxury of having an abundance of them, after having been compelled to do wholly without them, and to adopt all kinds of unsatisfactory substitutes. The terrible potato disease had not at this time been heard of; nor do I think it has yet really appeared in this colony.

Quantities of the pretty downy-leaved wild Geranium grew in this same potato field, which was part of a large inclosure on the bank of the Swan River; and beneath the broad belt of majestic trees which skirted it, forming a continuous grove beside the water, I used to find store of lovely shrubs and

flowers, and tangles of the wild native raspberry, the only thing I have yet seen really like an eatable fruit that these strange unfinished countries produce. One might fancifully believe that the Australian colonies were discovered too soon, and that Nature—that familiar term which we so often use to spare the light or irreverent mention of the Great Divine mover and guide of all—had not completed her design; and that the dry seedy trees and juiceless herbs of Australia would, in a few more ages, have changed into kindlier and better things; and the great impenetrable reedy desert, which spreads over thousands of miles in New Holland, would, perhaps, then have been uplifted into hills and mountains, whose fresh streams and grassy valleys might have supported a population commensurate with the immense extent of territory: but the charm is broken! Art and invention, and busy, gold-digging, mammon-worshipping men have intruded ere the great task was accomplished.

But the raspberry seems to have been brought nearer to completion than most things here, and were the fruit more abundant, it would be of great value; but when we found what we called "a quantity" of raspberries, there were never so many as I should

have wished to gather for George alone, so that they are scarcely worth mentioning, except for their great beauty. The leaf and stem resemble those of the blackberry, but are smaller and slighter, never shooting up great thick stalks covered with spines like sharks' teeth, such as I remember among my blackberry haunts at home, but slender and weak; the blossoms small, with the bright, pinkish, lilac petals turning inwards to the centre; and the berries of a bright clear transparent scarlet, like the berries of the woody nightshade. Their flavour is pleasant, but not comparable to that of the garden raspberry.

Our old pointer, Don, always accompanied us in our rides and walks, and sometimes started a brush kangaroo, giving chase most gallantly, though without the remotest chance of catching his hopping game, which went bounding off, over tussocks and logs, through scrub, and under or over everything in its way, in a half-flying style, most marvellous and incomprehensible to our good old English dog, who, after a long chase, used to come panting back to us, wagging his tail, and *looking* his apologies for the failure, as plainly as if he said, "I really beg your pardon, master, but the hares I used

to hunt at home have not the ugly trick of hopping which these practise, and, positively, I don't understand it!"

My beautiful spaniel, "Dick Swiveller," generally shared the chase and the disappointment, but, being a Tasmanian by birth, perhaps the puzzle was less to him.

English sporting dogs point the kangaroo as they do any other game, and Don always chased the creatures most determinedly, but in vain; until one day, when, in hunting a rabbit, he jumped over a great old fallen tree, and hit upon a poor kangaroo that was asleep under its shelter. Don, although quite as much astonished as the kangaroo, killed it on the spot, and when his master carried home the prize, followed it closely, smelling and gently licking it, and then looking up at me, telling me with his expressive, honest, old face, how great a triumph had at last thrust itself upon him. Poor fellow! he hunted more than ever after this glorious affair, and several times disturbed a fine brush kangaroo very near our house, 'chasing it often across our path, and once as we stood still in a shady part of the public road, listening to the *thud, thud, thud,* of its measured jumps as it approached

us: the beautiful gentle-looking deer-faced creature leaped almost against us, and then instantly turning short round, hopped over a log, and away into the thick scrub, but at no violent speed; he had been pursued by old Don too often to deem that necessary, and, as usual, away went Don and Dick after him, and with the same result. The dogs used here to hunt the kangaroo have the shape and general character of the greyhound, but are very much larger in size, and coarser altogether, uniting great strength with speed.

As I have mentioned the kangaroo, perhaps my most systematic method will be to give a short description of the indigenous animals of Tasmania, rather than introduce stray sketches of them in the accidental manner in which I have made their acquaintance.

I commence with the largest, the Great or Forest Kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*), the "Forester" of the colonists, which I have not yet seen in its wild state. Many years ago they were very numerous, and might constantly be observed feeding in the day-time on the open country in groups of from five to twenty. The oldest and heaviest male of the herd was called a "Boomer," probably a native

term. When chased, these patriarchs of the forest, being large and heavy, were always the least swift, and consequently most frequently taken, until at length the great boomer kangaroo has become in all the inhabited districts an extinct animal. The females, and younger males, or "bucks," are much less, the elderly gentlemen alone attaining the great size described by the early settlers. So many idle vagabonds have been in the constant habit of roaming about with packs of twenty or thirty huge dogs each, to procure kangaroo skins for sale, that the forest species is now very rarely seen. An excellent Act of Council was introduced by Sir Eardley Wilmot, and passed into law, tending to the partial protection of the kangaroos, preventing persons from hunting on Crown lands without licences, which are granted by the police magistrates. If the latter always took the proper means to ascertain the characters of those who apply for licences, and conscientiously refused to grant them to men of known bad character, the benefit conferred by this Act would be very great. But as many of the so-called "kangaroocrs" are notorious cattle and sheep-stealers, the want of proper discrimination in the magistrates is productive of infinite evil, and in

some instances not only neutralizes the effect of the Act, but adds to the mischievous power of the vagabond "kangarooers," by permitting their location on any of the Crown lands, however close to private property, thus enabling them to carry on their nefarious transactions with success and impunity.

Formerly, the size attained by the old "boomers" was enormous; the hind quarters frequently weighed (when skinned and dressed) from 70 to 90 lbs., and the whole animal from 120 to 160 lbs. These were large powerful creatures, measuring in their common position about five feet in height; but when they rise on their toes, with the strong thick tail serving as a prop and support, they stand above six feet high. When brought to bay, the old boomers fight very resolutely, and if one can take up his favourite position, in water about three feet deep, so that the dogs must swim to reach him, he can keep off a whole pack. As each dog swims up, the kangaroo lays him under water with his hand-like fore paws, holding him down until another claims his attention, and so disposes of one after another until the dogs are exhausted; and sometimes he tears them dreadfully with the long sharp solid

claws of his fore feet, which he uses most adroitly, ripping and cutting in any direction with sure effect. It is, I believe, generally supposed that they inflict the most severe wounds with the hind feet, but this is not the case until they are overcome and thrown down; as, when fighting erect, they always raise themselves on their hind toes. Their general colour is dark gray, or ash colour, lighter beneath. Mr. Meredith, on one occasion, long ago, saw a pure white kangaroo, and more recently we heard of another white one having been seen: these, I imagine, are albinos, which seem to occur occasionally among all animals.

The ordinary jump of the large kangaroo is about sixteen feet; and they can clear a four-rail fence, about five feet high, in their course, without any visible alteration or exertion.

All the species of kangaroo are easily tamed, and become as familiar as any other domestic animal; but as all dogs here are accustomed and trained to hunt and kill them, pets of this kind are certain, sooner or later, to come to an untimely end. One which was reared here some time back at last stood higher than the woman it belonged to, and used to accompany her whenever she left home, just as a

dog would do, hopping along by her side in a most friendly and companionable manner; but one day, meeting some strange dogs, it was unfortunately hunted and killed. The young of all species of kangaroo are commonly called Joeys, without regard to sex, but I am not aware if this is a corruption of some native name, or one bestowed by the early colonists.

The Brush Kangaroo (*Macropus Bennettii*) stands three feet high in its usual position, with the hind elbow or heels bent up. Its colour is dark iron-gray, lighter beneath. The doe, like that of the forest species, has one young one at a time, which she carries and shelters in the pouch, until the baby so much outgrows its cradle, that the long legs and tail poke out.

The sweet gentle expression of face peculiar to the kangaroo tribe is most beautiful and winning; their eyes are full, dark, and soft, and the erect, animated, widely-open ears, in perpetual motion, give at the same time a keen and yet timid expression to the head. I never had so good an opportunity of observing the different species of kangaroo, as in the collection which Sir Eardley Wilmot kept as pets in a wooded and bushy

paddock close to Government House, Hobarton, where, within the paling fence, they enjoyed their liberty, and being tolerably accustomed to visitors, allowed themselves to be looked at very composedly; but in their perfectly wild state, a passing glance is all that can be obtained. The habits of the brush kangaroo are different from those of the forester; they are never seen feeding in herds by day, and if two or three chance to be started from the same vicinity, they all set off in different directions. Usually they are not seen until roused from the bush log or tussocks they have been crouching in, like a hare in her form: their common average jump is about twelve feet.

I have now (1850) two young brush kangaroos, Joey and Beppo, living in a grassy inclosure close to the house, and associating with my poultry very amicably; though they sometimes slily creep after the peacock, as if with the intention of biting his long gorgeous train, when it looks green in the sunshine, supposing it perhaps to be some new vegetable. They are fed with green food, bread, or corn, and are fond of new milk. They hold grass or leaves in their hands, and eat very daintily and elegantly, never seeming in any hurry, but helping

themselves with a degree of refinement and deliberation that might offer a salutary example to some nobler animals. For a year I had only "Joey," and an old hen turkey annoyed him exceedingly at one time, in her stupid terror lest he should hurt her chickens, and chased him round the inclosure at a furious pace; but by putting the old lady under a coop, I restored poor "Joey's" peace and tranquillity. Both he and little Beppo (which we have reared this year in the house like a pet kitten) sleep some hours during the day, under the bower of boughs over their kennel, and hop about and feed chiefly in the night-time.

The Wolloby is the species next in size to the Brush Kangaroo in this colony; the name is usually spelled Wallaby, but the *full* native pronunciation can only be correctly represented by using the *o* instead of the *a*. In the aboriginal languages of these colonies, the vowels are sounded peculiarly full and round.

The wolloby, in its common position, stands about two feet high; the fur is gray, mingled with a brown tan colour, and is much softer than the larger kangaroo's, being more like that of the opossum. These animals frequent thickets and

the dense close scrubs near rivers and watercourses, where they baffle the most active dogs by winding and popping in and out, like a rabbit in a furze-brake. In chasing kangaroos, or, as it is technically termed, "kangarooing," large powerful dogs are used; but in thickly-wooded and scrubby places, a sharp clever *little* dog is also required, to put the game out of the thickets, where the great dogs could not penetrate. The wolloby and brush kangaroo often visit gardens and fields at night, to banquet on the dainties they find there; and by far the greatest portion of those destroyed are caught in snares set for the purpose, in the tracks or "runs" they frequent. There is, it would seem, about the same difference in the habits of the forest, brush, and wolloby kangaroos, as that existing between those of the deer, the hare, and the rabbit.

The Kangaroo-Rat (*Hypsiprymnus murinus*) is a pretty little animal about thirteen inches in height, with grayish fur, harsher than that of the kangaroo, and the face has more of a *rattish* expression; nevertheless it is certainly a pretty animal, and so easily tamed as to be frequently made a pet, gambolling and frisking about the house, and

following those who caress it, like a favourite dog or cat. In their natural state they eat grass, and also scratch and burrow at night for roots, and have unluckily a very clever trick of digging their own potatoes, or rather those of the settlers, which they appropriate without scruple. They form warm nests of dry grass on the ground, well-sheltered, and open at one side only. A prejudice exists against eating their flesh, which is well-flavoured and whiter than that of the true kangaroos, the latter being dark-coloured, lean, tender, and more similar to hare than any other meat I am acquainted with, and is undoubtedly excellent, when hung for a sufficient length of time, and properly dressed. A very rich gravy soup is often made from it, and a colonial dish called a "steamer," consisting of the meat and some good bacon finely minced, and stewed in rich gravy, is also good; but the hind-quarters, roasted, with hare-stuffing and currant jelly, form a dish that Dr. Kitchener himself would have applauded, and which now is generally considered a dainty even here, especially by our town-friends. Yet I have had servants who looked upon our eating kangaroo as something absolutely monstrous, and turned away in horror

at the thought of partaking of what they expressively designated as "*just a wild beast!*" A haunch of tiger or a wolf-chop would, in their estimation, be quite as reasonable and proper food; but fortunately they could always find an abundance of tame mutton in our kitchen to console their outraged sensibility.

The kangaroo-rat is not by many persons considered fit to be eaten, nor have I ever had one cooked, for we partake the common prejudice—whether caused by the name, and the unpleasant association of ideas inseparable from it, I know not; but as it is a prejudice which serves to save the lives of the poor little animals, I have not the slightest desire to have it removed.

Of the Bandicoot, two species are found here: one (*Perameles Gunnii*) is of a light brownish ash-colour, half as large again as a full-sized rat, and somewhat broader in proportion; the other (*Perameles obescula*) is rather less, and its colour an ashy fawn, striped with light gray.

One of our servants lately found two young striped bandicoots, pretty little soft creatures like great mice, and brought them to the children for pets. We kept them for some weeks, feeding them

on bread, milk, and raw potatoes; one was accidentally hurt, and died; the other I turned out into the garden, thinking to bestow rather a luxurious life upon him, amidst potatoes, fruit, and other good things: but I could not prevail on him to accept his liberty; he took up his abode in the parlour, and soon found a warm snug bed among the multifarious contents of a deep work-basket, where he lay coiled up all day, and grumbled and bit at any one who disturbed him until his usual time of rising, about dusk, when he regularly bounced out of the basket, ran to the corner where his saucer of fresh milk was always placed, nibbled his bread or potato, and scampered about all the evening like a great tame mouse, running under our chairs and over our feet and dresses, and up the folds of them, with confiding boldness, but not allowing any one to lay hold of him. His end, poor little fellow, was, I fear, a violent one, for I strongly suspect my demure tabby cat must have evaded our wonted vigilance and gained access to the parlour during the time poor Cooty was awake; for one morning, to the children's great regret, his bed was cold and empty, and he was no more seen amongst us.

The Porcupine (*Echidna*) is fully four times the

size of an English hedgehog, covered on the back with spines three or four inches long, which protrude from a coat of thick grayish fur; its feet have long toes, with long strong claws, and, instead of a mouth and teeth, a long narrow round bill appears to complete its extraordinary visage. It usually weighs five or six pounds, being exceedingly fat. Persons who are partial to sucking pig like the flesh of the porcupine, which somewhat resembles it, but is too rich for most palates. These creatures are found in wet springy ground, where they probably feed on tadpoles, worms, and ants. They burrow in the earth, and often frequent hollows in moist rocks, and if pursued or hemmed in, make their escape by scratching a hole and sinking into it. Mr. Meredith once brought one from the Schoutens to Swan Port, and on landing put it down on the broad open beach, where, being left for a few moments, it burrowed down into the sand and vanished in an incredibly short space of time, scarcely leaving a trace behind.

On another occasion one was found by the dogs on one of the rocky hills of the tier, and was safely carried down to me in a covered tin boiler. Knowing the mysterious subterranean habits of my new

friend, I was not a little puzzled how to accommodate him without losing him; and, as a temporary arrangement, he was deposited at the bottom of a wooden churn, which I thought sufficiently deep to prevent his absconding. Shortly after, on going to look at my captive, I found him, as is shown in my sketch, clinging by his long claws to the top of the churn, with his conical head peeping over. The duck-like bill is nearly as thin and round as a tobacco-pipe, and about two inches long, and gave an indescribably droll kind of pursed-up whistling expression to the strange creature's face, as his bright little eyes peered about him from out their furry nooks; the short broad tail, thickly beset with spines, like the back and sides, being spread out in a fan shape, not unlike that of a lobster. I was very curious to watch the ways of this anomalous little animal for a while, and to keep it confined for that purpose; but there was something so pitiful, though absurd, in the pleading, helpless, puzzled look of its queer face, as it seemed prying into mine, that was to me quite irresistible, knowing, as I well did, the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of keeping it alive, far less making it happy; so I at once carried it to my garden, let it crawl away, and

saw it immediately commence a sidling kind of motion, casting up a circular ridge of earth, beneath which in a few seconds it had effectually screwed itself out of sight. I hoped it would have taken up its abode there, but we never could find a sign or vestige of it afterwards.

The Wombat (*Phascolomys* ——), like the porcupine, is eaten and relished by some persons, but is fatter and coarser, with a strong rank flavour. It is a most harmless, helpless, inoffensive animal, by no means agile, and falling an easy prey to its pursuers, if cut off from its retreat to the rocky hollows and crevices in which it lives, and which it squeezes into, through a smaller opening than would be supposed capable of admitting its fat squab body. Its head resembles that of the badger, but with a rounder snout. It has very small eyes, strong bristly whiskers, very short ears, short legs, short tail, and long coarse gray hair. Its body is broad and flat, and weighs from 30 lbs. to 50 lbs., and the creature's whole aspect betokens slowness and inactivity.

The children of a settler at the river Mersey had a pet wombat, which lived with them for some time, and used to play with them, and follow them about with great docility and good temper. They made

it a bed on a box, with a piece of blanket to cover it, and it was often seen to scratch the blanket snugly round it, and pull it up when slipping away, in the most cosy and civilized manner possible. Having also a *penchant* for making its way into any other bed from which a scrap of blanket or rug hung down to serve as a climbing ladder, it became an object of dislike to the servants, and the worthy farmer determined, much to the grief of the children, to part with the favourite, which, like all other favourites, was fast gaining foes. He carried it away a considerable distance, put it down in the forest, and returned home with the story of his success; but ere the evening was ended, a certain well-known scratching sound was heard at the door, and the delighted children opened it for their poor weary wombat, who had found his way home to them again. A second time he was conveyed away, and to a greater distance, but still he came back; the third time the farmer carried him across the Mersey in a boat, and left him on the opposite bank of the broad deep river, quite secure now that the business was finally settled. His poor friend was, however, still of a different opinion, and by the time the boat had touched the home shore, the

creature had found a huge fallen tree, which lay half across the stream, and had crawled to the extreme end of it, wistfully gazing upon his departing friends, who, thinking it quite impossible that he could cross the intervening portion of the river, went away home. How the heavy fat thing *did* cross, no one knows, but he arrived as usual that night, and, as may be imagined, his kind-hearted master did not try again to drive him away. Unfortunately, he was at last accidentally burned, from creeping too close to the hot ashes of the hearth, and, in mercy to his sufferings, was killed.

Wombats are generally found on rocky places, especially the summits of mountains and gullies, where their haunts are mostly inaccessible. Their chief food consists of the roots of the grass-tree and other plants, to procure which they leave their rocky fastnesses at night, and visit neighbouring marshy flats, where they scratch for their living, like the porcupine and bandicoot. The skin of the wombat is so thick and tough that the teeth of large dogs are seldom strong enough to penetrate it, and are not unfrequently absolutely pulled out in the effort, so that some of the hunters of the Bush are in the habit of punishing their dogs for

meddling with a wombat; and after a few such lessons, the dogs content themselves with barking round the harmless creature when they find one, and its stout natural coat befriends it like a suit of armour.

CHAPTER XV.

The "Devil."—Native Cat.—Tiger-cat.—Native Tiger, or Hyena.—In at the Death.—Musk-rat.—Platypus.—Opossum Mouse.—Kangaroo Mouse.

THE "Devil" is the name universally given here to the *Dasyurus ursinus*, and, as I have never heard any other appellation applied to this very ugly, savage, mischievous little beast, I must be permitted to use the one hitherto bestowed on it. This species is entirely black; another kind (*D. macrourus*), sometimes called "Spotted-tail," has a white tip to the tail, and a white stripe, extending down the throat and between the forelegs, towards which it sometimes spreads, forming three limbs of a cross: the pied species is rather less than the other, and not so numerous, but in all other respects they are alike. The body is 18 or 20 inches long, and the head forms nearly a third of this, being large, broad, and flat, apparently very

destitute of brains. The jaws open to a terrific extent, nearly to the back of the enormous head, and are armed with large powerful teeth, like those of a dog. The tail is so stiff and unpliant, as to seem more like a wooden than a real one; when the animal runs, the tail sticks straight out. The feet resemble those of a dog, but the paws are more spread out, and have large strong claws. The creature has an awkward wabbling gait, and its pace is slow, as compared with that of most other wild animals. Mr. Meredith has at different times caught them, by fairly running them down; one of these was full grown, and ran for three-quarters of a mile, when, just as Mr. Meredith came close up with it, it suddenly stood still, and snapped at his legs, as he, unable to stop himself, jumped over it; he, however, soon killed it. The other two were younger ones, and were killed after a much shorter chase.

The devil's cry is a little like that of the oppossum, but sounds ill-natured and spiteful, instead of the pleasant merry chuckle of the latter. The devils are often fearfully destructive, killing great numbers of lambs. At one of my father's stations on the Apsley River, north of Swan Port, the shepherds caught in a pitfall, during one winter, no

less than a hundred and forty-three devils. They frequently appear to roam about in small packs, and, if a lamb be killed by one, the sheep are immediately removed to a distance, and traps set in the run; these are generally successful, and seven, eight, or more of these animals are caught in quick succession, after which months may elapse without the same spot being infested with them again. They, like the more valuable native animals, are gradually becoming rare in all the occupied parts of the island. A dead one, which was brought for me to see, so swarmed with *fleas*, that they formed a continuous brown under-coat all over its body, amongst the coarse, harsh, black hair; and the place on the veranda, where it was laid down for a few moments, became covered with them in such myriads as to force me with all my natural-history inquisitiveness to make way for mops and buckets of cold water.

The "Native Cat" of New South Wales, which I formerly described, is another species of *Dasyurus*, and the "Tiger-cat" of this island, I imagine, belongs also to this ferocious family. It is larger than the "native cat," and its colour is a handsome chestnut brown, spotted with white. Its habits are

of the same savage destructive kind as those of the rest of its kindred.

The "Native Tigers" (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*) are yet more to be dreaded among sheep than the "devils;" but, fortunately, they are far less numerous. The tiger is a large powerful animal, about the size of the largest kind of sheep-dog, but more muscular. I have the skin of one, measuring 4 feet 6 inches from the nose to the end of the back, the tail being 1 foot 10 inches long in addition, compressed laterally, and set on more like that of a kangaroo than that of a dog. The hind legs have the lower joints peculiarly short, more so than those of a greyhound, and the animal frequently rests the whole joint on the ground, even when in a standing position *.

The first opportunity I had of noticing the animal alive, was when a shepherd in the neighbourhood came to show us one about two-thirds grown, which he had caught in a snare. Having killed the mother and caught the cub, he came to show his prize, and receive the usual tribute of money or tobacco, which is always given

* The woodcut of this creature in "Murray's Encyclopædia of Geography" is a good portrait of it; the *best* I have yet seen.

for a tiger killed or taken. He had the animal secured by a chain and collar, and when it was to be carried off, slipped a strong bag very adroitly over its head and shoulders, pushed the hind legs in, and fastened it. I pitied the unhappy beast most heartily, and would fain have begged more gentle usage for him; but I was compelled to acknowledge some coercion necessary, as, when I softly stroked his back (after taking the precaution of engaging his great teeth in the discussion of a piece of meat), I was in danger of having my hand snapped off.

I obtained a place for this tiger in Sir Eardley Wilmot's collection; but its untamable ferocity and savageness resisted all endeavours to civilize and tame it, and, in consequence, the carefully-stuffed skin was eventually preserved, instead of the living form of my ungentle protégé.

I believe the tigers are truly untamable, and in that respect, if in no other, merit the name sometimes given them of Native Hyena; at least, I know several instances in which young ones have been kept and reared up kindly (chained, of necessity); but they never could be approached with safety, even by those who daily fed them; and so,

on the whole, are perhaps rather ill adapted for pets. Their colour is very light brown, handsomely marked across the hind-quarters with ten or twelve straight bands of black, the hindmost ones about an inch wide on the top of the back, and tapering off on either side. The stripes become narrower and less distinct as they approach the shoulders, where they cease entirely. The head is much like that of a dog, and would be far from ugly were its expression less savage. The ears are short, open, broad, and erect, and look very soft; but I did not attempt to touch them, my previous attentions having been so rudely repulsed. The feet are also like those of a dog, and the legs thick and muscular; but the tiger is by no means so swift as its appearance would indicate.

The common pace of the tiger is a measured, steady canter, and, from various anecdotes I have heard, it appears that they pursue the object of their chase wholly by scent, and win (literally) "in the long run" by their long endurance. On one occasion Mr. Adam Amos, of Swan Port, had made his way, by a new track, to the top of the encompassing tier of mountains which separate the Swan Port district from the interior; after he

had travelled for some time along the ridge of one of the numerous narrow steep "saddles," as they are termed, among the hills, the ground became so rocky that the fat cattle he was driving could not proceed any further, and he and his party encamped for the night. The next morning, about daybreak, they prepared to return, and were getting breakfast, when a brush kangaroo came along the ridge where they were, and hopped past, within a few yards of their fire. In ten minutes after this, a female tiger came cantering along in the same line, with her nose close to the ground, scenting out the kangaroo, and passed round the fire exactly in the same track, not noticing the cattle-party, who were observing the chase with some curiosity. About twenty minutes now elapsed, when two young tiger-whelps appeared, holding the same course, and, passing round the fire, went on after their mother, who, with her steady pace, would finally run down the more swift but less enduring kangaroo, and the cubs, following on her track, if not actually "in at the death," were no doubt in excellent time for the dinner.

Mr. Meredith, whilst one day gathering wild

cattle, having followed them into a thick scrub, dismounted, and sat down for a while to let his horse rest after the hard chase; shortly after, on hearing a loud heavy crashing amongst the sticks, he thought that some of the cattle had turned in that direction, when a very large tiger burst through the thicket, and came close by him, paused an instant to look at him, and then, dropping its nose again to the ground, followed on along the track of the cattle. They will, when hard pressed by hunger, attack even man. A servant being engaged, some years since, in a thick scrub, cutting "tea-tree" poles, an old tiger came up, and would have attacked him, but, being weak and apparently half-starved, was quickly knocked down and secured, and the man brought him home, where he was chained up and well fed, and so lived for some time. Being old and nearly toothless, the poor beast had been unable to procure his usual food, and was thus rendered daring and desperate.

The Musk-rat is a pretty little harmless animal, common in most rivers in Van Diemen's Land, and I have often watched them swimming about of an evening. They live in holes, which they

burrow in the river-banks, and seem to be of similar habits to the English water-vole, but are fully twice its size. Their fur is soft, and of a reddish brown, paler beneath; the tail is well furred, like the body, and is white at the end, like that of the ring-tailed opossum. The head is an enlarged portrait of the water-vole, with similarly rounded nose, and long whiskers, very pretty and gentle-looking: an odour of musk pervades the whole animal. The noise they sometimes make, when playing in a river on a dark night, would half induce one to fancy a shoal of porpoises were floundering there, instead of these frisky little creatures; plopping in from the high bank, scuffling along the water, and splashing loudly about, they seem to glory in their agile nimbleness; and I have often regretted that the darkest nights were the seasons of their chief revels, when they could only be heard and not seen; for a musk-rat, swimming staidly and stilly across the river in the dim twilight, evidently charged with business of grave import, wears a totally different aspect from the mad, frolicsome, dissipated fellows of the night's revelry. One morning, in passing along a path near a creek,

we espied one of them couched under a log, amongst some scrub; he had, doubtless, stayed out too late over night, and was overtaken by daylight before he could reach home. Be this as it may, the opportunity of seeing one of his species on dry land was too rare to be neglected, and he very quietly permitted our scrutiny, only creeping more closely under the log when we threw leaves or chips at him to make him move, and uttering, by way of remonstrance, a sound something similar to that of the opossum. As soon as we left the place, we saw him dart across the path in the direction of the creek.

Another species of water-rat frequents the river Mersey, on the north coast of Van Diemen's Land, which is like the musk-rat in its habits, form, and size, but has no white spot on the tail, nor is it at all scented with musk.

The Platypus (*Ornithorhyncus paradoxus*) is not common in Tasmania, but a few are found in some of the northern rivers, the Mersey, Forth, &c., precisely similar to those in New South Wales.

The two rarest and most beautiful little animals in the island are commonly known as the kangaroo mouse and the opossum mouse. Of the latter, I

have seen three specimens, and most lovely, soft, curious little things they are; about the size of, or rather larger than, an English dormouse, with gray fur, soft as down, bright, full black eyes, wide transparent mouse-like ears, and prehensile tail, naked on the under side. The little face has the gentle expression of most of the kangaroo and opossum tribe; but during the daytime it is so snugly nestled round in its warm fur, and the closely-curled tail laid so carefully over it, that until the little creature is disturbed, it looks like a round gray ball, which, on being gently moved, gives to view the delicate little head; and this, looking imploringly at the intruder, utters a low kind of grumbling sigh, and tucks itself out of sight more completely than ever. At night it grows more lively, and, when so kept as to permit in some measure the display of its natural habits, is very active and graceful. A few fresh branches hung from the ceiling of a room, with the box or cage in which the mouse is kept placed among them with its door open, form a contrivance that sometimes answers, if the house be free from cats; the elegant movements of the agile sprightly little creature are then exceedingly amusing.

In their natural state, they inhabit holes in trees where they form exquisitely neat nests of grass and fibres, lined with soft down or web, and are seldom discovered until the tree is felled which contains their tiny habitation. Of the three I have seen, one was so found at "The Bogs," on the Swan Port tier, and given to our friend Mr. J. B. Jukes, who, I believe, kept it alive on board the "Fly" for nearly a year. Another jumped out from an old charred tree at Port Sorell, which Mr. Meredith set fire to; he caught the mouse and brought it to me in his hat; but, after looking at it awhile, we gave the poor little terrified panting creature its liberty, near its old haunt. The third was chopped out, nest and all, from a tree which one of our servants was cutting up for firewood, near the same place, and this one travelled to Hobarton in a tin wafer-box, lined with flannel and wool, to join Sir Eardley Wilmot's collection of native animals. During the time I kept it, it frisked about merrily at night, and ate heartily of bread slightly moistened and well sugared. I also provided it with fresh green food and rose-leaves, but the bread and sugar alone were eaten.

A fourth specimen was destined for me by our

head shepherd, who kept it for some time in his hut, where it lived in a tin canister on the chimney-piece, going in and out of its small dwelling as it pleased, and becoming quite tame; but being allowed so much liberty, it apparently wished for more, and ran away.

The female has several young ones at a time, which are most beautiful diminutive little morsels of animal life.

The Kangaroo Mouse I only know from description, never having been fortunate enough to see one. I believe it is much more slender and long in the limbs than the opossum mouse, but with the same general appearance and habits. One was lately caught near the Mersey by the settler whom I have already mentioned as having the tame wombat; seeing the little animal darting between his feet, he closed them at the instant and captured it. This was a female, with seven young ones in her pouch; all suffered the usual sad fate of such prizes, being doomed to imprisonment, and in a short time they died.

All the opossum tribe, when in a state of captivity, are very fond of sugar, and if suffered will eat it to excess. They will also eat tea-leaves,

tobacco, and meat, all of which are unnatural to them; and I have no doubt that the usual very early deaths of tamed opossums are chiefly owing to such injudicious variety of food.

These "mice," as we call them, belong, I believe, to the genus *Phascogale*, and are marsupial, and with the pouch opening anteriorly, as is the case in all those which sit upright, jump on the hind feet, and use the fore-paws as hands, such as the kangaroo and opossum families.

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Printed by G. Woodfall and Son, Angel Court, Skinner Street, London.

00056823

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 26 March, 2016